Position of Hindu Women During the Mughal Period
(1526 - 1707)

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SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

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PREFACE

The inspiration for undertaking the present dissertation came to me from my revered teacher Dr. B.D. Pandey, Reader in History, L.S. College, Muzaffarpur. Himself a celebrated scholar of Medieval Indian History, he asked me to work on the Position of Hindu women during the Mughal Period and kindly agreed to supervise it. The Hindu women of Mughal Period had not been paid sufficient attention and there was no separate book on the topic. Hence it was necessary to work on the present topic. The fruitful research on the topic concerned will help students in surveying the actual position of Hindu women in society during Mughal period. I hope this thesis will be useful not only to the scholars and litterateurs interested in the past but also to students of contemporary social affairs by indicating elements in our rich and composite heritage thet have stood the test of time and deserve to be preserved.

The foreign travellers' accounts and contemporary literatures as well as modern research books have constituted the main sources of information in writing this thesis. Valuable incidental references have also been obtained from contemporary Persian chronicles. The Persian chronicles, with the possible exception of Abul Fazl's "Ain-i-Akbari" and Badaoni's "Munta-Khab-ut-Tawarikh", have mostly narrated the political history of the time, the military exploits of the rulers and the grandeur of the royal courts. Except for making certain stray references here and there, almost all the contemporary Persian chronicles, excluding of course, Abul Fazl and Badaoni, fail to picture the life of the millions of commoners living in the numerous villages and towns of this country. To these writers and scholars, their patrons with their courts and seraglio meant everything, and they had neither the willingness on their part nor, perhaps, suitable incentive and opportunities to mix with the people, and to know the conditions of their living.

The accounts of the foreign travellers, no doubt, constitute almost an indispensable contemporary source of Indian history, but what cannot be dispensed with, is not necessarily infallible. On the contrary, they also had their limitations. They did not know the country as a whole, rather they mostly visited the important cities and towns, and there, too, their stay was very brief. As such, they generally remained aloof from the teeming millions, inhabiting the distant and secluded rural corners of this country. They were, in most cases, very inadequately informed about the history, traditions, religion and geography of this vast sub-continent. Unfamiliarity and lack of adequate knowledge about the things Indians, often led to misunderstandings on their part. At times, they could not fully comprehend the inner significance of some of the long-established Indian customs and, as such, most of them were superficial, if not perfunctory, in their remarks about them. Besides, the accounts of these travellers often suffer from historical inaccuracies for obvious reasons. They had no easy access to the authentic chronicles of the country, and for information regarding the current events they had mostly to depend on secondary sources. Moreover, they were apt to get confused with unfamiliar foreign names, and the 17th century corruptions of Indian nomenclature probably made confusion worse confounded.

Inspite of all these, however, the foreign travellers had, at least, one great advantage over the contemporary Persian chronicles. Having nothing to fear or to expect from the rulers, they could fearlessly tell them unadulterated truth without caring for official forms and favours. Besides, having come from other lands they recorded with great care and sincerity even such matters which externally appeared to be unimportant, and as such, could have been ignored by the native writers as common place.

It can be asserted that in the literature of a particular period, there is vivid portrayal of the life of the people. Most of the contemporary poets like Surdas, Tulsidas, Keshavadas, Prithviraj, Bihari, Mukundaram, Dvija Madhava, Ghanaram Chakravarty, etc. have tried to depict in the poems what they saw and felt, and thus, their works constitute invaluable sources for constructing India's social history during the period under review. In fact, these works form a store-house of immensely valuable information regarding the contemporary socio-cultural and economic life of the people, and as such, their importance as a source of India's social history should not be minimised in my case. All possible attempts have been made herewith the help of specialists, to thrash the grain from the chaff, and to study the contemporary literatures with the sole purpose of collecting the relevant socially significant theme. Some of the semi-contemporary works belonging to a period a bit earlier or later than that under review, have also been used. All efforts have been made to check up the theme collected from the literary sources, by an analytical and corroborative comparison with the contemporary foreign traveller's accounts and the Persian chronicles.

A few words may also be mentioned herewith regard to the general plan of treatment which has been followed in this work. Chapter I deals with the position of Hindu Women during sultanate period. Attempts have been made here to throw light on the position of Hindu women during ancient period also.

Chapter II discusses the contribution of Hindu women in Mughal harem and politics. Harem is a vague 'word' but I have tried my best to explain this word. At the same time the role of Hindu women in harem and politics has been dealt with clearly in this chapter. The 'Harem' maintained by the Emperors, Hindu Rajas and the nobles has been elaborately described.

Chapter III describes the position of Hindu Women as a wife and as a mother in the family. The status of a Hindu lady from childhood to old age has been critically analysed. At the same time her position as a widow has been also explained.

Chapter IV illustrates the rituals concerning Hindu women. Rituals which are sometimes called Samskar consist of Birth, Marriage and Funeral rites. Contemporary literary works have been copiously quoted, and at the same time, the theme collected from this source have been critically compared with those obtained from the Persian chronicles and the accounts of the foreign travellers.

Chapter V explains about the custom of Sati and Jauhar prevailing in Hindu society during Mughal Period. Sati was a dreadful custom among Hindu women and it deteriorated her status. A series of references have been consulted regarding this matter.

Chapter VI covers religious and cultural activities regarding Hindu Women. Religion was predominant in the lives of the Hindu ladies during the Mughal Period. The State of education among Hindu Women has been fully discussed.

Chapter VII deals with conclusion, Summary and Bibliography.

I take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues, friends and well-wishers who have constantly been encouraging me for completing this work and taking interest in it. First of all I am thankful to Prof. Nawal Kishore Sinha, Department of History, R.D.S. College, Muzaffarpur. It was he who had given me the idea of doing my research on some topic in Medieval Indian history. I am indebted to him for his various suggestions and encouragement.

I am grateful to Dr. B.D. Pandey, L.S.College, Muzaffarpur who made me successful in submitting this thesis in time. It was only on account of his competent guidance and constant goading that the work could finally be completed. He made anxious enquiries regarding the progress of the work and kept a vigilant eye on me. I have no hesitation in saying that I could never have completed the work without the scholarly and competent guidance of Prof. Pandey. No amount of word can express my sense of gratitude to him.

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I am thankful to Shri Ajit Kumar for having completed the typing of the thesis with efficiency, promptness and keen personal interest.

I am also thankful to my father, wife and other members of my family without whose co-operation I would not have been successful in this arduous task. Last but not the least, I am highly indebted to my brother-in-law Prof.(Dr.) H.P.Sinha, Deptt. of Electrical Engineering, M.I.T., Muzaffarpur who left no stone unturned in making me what I am to-day.

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CHAPTER - I

POSITION OF HINDU WOMEN DURING SULTANATE PERIOD

It is universally admitted that the position of women in a country reflects the level of its civilisation, culture and refinement. Henry Maine says that the degree in which personal immunity and proprietory capacity of women are recognised in a particular state or community, is a test of the degree of advance of its civilisation.[1] In India, from the earliest days, our women have enjoyed a subordinate, yet honourable status in society. The code of Manu, the ancient Hindu Law-giver has ascribed to our women a dependent, but by no means a dishonourable position in society. Manu says thus, "By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently even in her own house. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons, a woman must never be independent.[2] Though Manu has ascribed to our women a thoroughly dependent, status, yet he does not forget to reveal that the Hindu women in pre-Muslim period enjoyed an honourable status in society both in theory as well as in practice.[3] During this period there are instances of queens successfully ruling their Kingdo

During the time of Harsha, his sister Rajyashri, after the death of her husband, occupied a seat of honour and also participated in state deliberations.[4] They did not hesitate even to take up arms to protect the life of their family and honour of their country. They freely took part in music, dance, politics, hunting and other activities. Even in the Rajput period administrative training was imparted to promising girls of ruling families.[5] They were employed in royal palaces and also served as betel-carriers and flower-bearers.[6] They rode on elephants and chariots and took part even in excursions. They were also used as spies and were often used for the purpose of poisoning enemies.[8] The existence of Purdah, though not very common, cannot be completely denied.[9] But it was observed only in aristocratic families and not in families of lower classes because they worked freely in fields. Some of them became Bhikshunis.[10] Thus we see that they enjoyed quite respectable position in the field of learning and some of them distinguished themselves as reputed scholars, teachers and even debators.[11] Some ladies of aristocratic families took part in fine arts such as painting, music and dance.[12] These continued till the Rajput period, Rajput ladies contimied the ancient customs and participated with their husbands in hunting, war expeditions and religious ceremonies.[13]

In pre-historic age there existed matriarchal society.[14] During Rig Vedic age the society was patriarichal.[15] But mother was respected as well.[16] The birth of a son was of great pleasure but the birth of a daughter was also not accepted as a curse. In fact, women enjoyed an honourable position in social life.[17] In society monogamy was acceptable, but polyandry was not prevalent. After some time polygamy started among upper classes.[18] child marriage was out of vogue.[19] Widow has right to remarriage or niyoga.[20] The woman of Vedic age was associate of his husband in religious life.[21] She had right to pray individually.[22] Upanayana Samskara existed in women like men and after it they started education.[23]

During later Vedic age the position of Hindu women in society deteriorated. The role of women in social life shortened They enjoyed partial liberty in marriage.[24] The birth of daughter was now understood as a cause of misery. Hence it can be said that the declining age for the position of Hindu women was later Vedic age.[25]

During Buddhism the position of women was pitiable. They were not the wife or queen of the house but an apparatus of luxuries.[26] Similarly Jainism taught to leave women as a means of lust.[27]

But right from first century to the advent of Islam the position of women was not at all deplorable. They were free from Purdah.[28] They were learned as well. Sheel Bhattarika was a great laureate.[29] Administrative and Military training was given to the women of ruling class. Vijaybhattarica, Lakshmidevi,Annadevi, Maliyadevi etc. are important among them.[30] Though the women enjoyed certain rights in social, religious and administrative spheres, their free intermingling with the men was not encouraged. Attempts were made to end this seclusion but in vain. The system of co-education, admission of women to monastries and their participation in philosophical discussions with learned men of their age show that women were not always restricted to the confines of the house.[31] Even on festivals and feasts women were seen rejoicing and sharing the gaiety along with men.[32] The system of Swayamvar which became quite popular reflects the liberty which the girls enjoyed in social life. Thus it seems that public opinion contributed to a large extent in setting the issues of woman's liberty.[33]

There is no reference of Sati system in Buddhism and Jainism. Mahabharat is also free from this instance except Madri.[34] But in the dramas of Kalidas there is a reference of

Sati System.[35] The custom of widow marriage vanished since 600 A.D. child widow marriage was prohibited since 100 A.D.[36] The general position of women began to decline mostly since 600 A.D.[37]

The birth of a female child in ancient India generally triggered anxiety in the minds of the parents causing them extreme misery while the birth of a son was an event to celebrate. The birth of girl produced an atmosphere of utter gloom in the family. The birth of a daughter was not a welcome event in the family.[38] Several reasons contributed to this hostile attitude towards the female progeny. The parents had to bear undue hardships in bringing up their daughters, arranging their marriage, providing for a handsome dowry and even supporting them in adverse situations after marriage. This led to the unpopularity of female children in Hindu families.[39] Although a daughter was an unwelcome child yet when it came to the question of judging comparative merits and talents of a son and a daughter, there was no discrimination on the ground of sex. Inspite of the fact that the girls were considered a liability their talents were appreciated.[40]

Although women in Ancient India were held in great esteem, yet, they had a subordinate place in the society. The factors responsible for this subordination were generally their fickle mindedness, weak disposition and lack of proper education. Hence the daughters remained under the protection of their parents and had no say in important issues concerning themselves.[41] As wives women played a different role. She had a number of duties and obligations to fulfil[42] but she enjoyed no independent status.[43]

A woman was expected to remain chaste and pure in every stage of her life. The seclusion of woman, prohibition of remarriage and abondoning the practice of niyoga were some of the means to ensure the purity of her conduct. Adultery was considered a grave sin[44] which undermined the chastity of the woman and shook the very basis of the sacred institution of marriage. Punishments, both mild and harsh, were inflicted upon those indulging in sexual perversion.[45] Sometimes the punishments were formal and examplary according to the caste of the individual.[46]

The institution of Purdah was prevalent among the Hindu ladies, especially of higher castes. The word Purdah means curtain But in broader sense it also means seclusion of women. Scholars hold different views regarding the inception of this system in India. Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha advocates the theory of the absence of Purdah system before the coming of the Muslims. He says that it was after the advent of the Muslims that this system was established in India. As the Musalmans became prominent in northern India, this system grew there rapidly. Where the influenc of the Muslims was less, it was not so well established. Even to this day, no such system exists from Rajputana to the Deccan or only nominally.[47] But according to some other historians the practice of Purdah was not new to the Indian soil as women of this land were observing it in some form or the other. It seems inappropriate to attribute it to the advent of the Muslim.[48] Formerly only the ladies of royal class observed this custom and it was voluntary,[49] for we find that the royal ladies have been seen without Veils on several occasions.[50] Mazumdar[51] and Rashid[52] in their recently published works have not been able to cite even isolated instances of its prevalance in ancient India. Dr. B.P.Mazumdar is of the opinion that the use of Veil was customary with the ladies of northern India. The Edilpur copper-plate of Kesavasena tells us that as Kesavasena passed through the city, the ladies saw him and behaved in a coquettish way casting anorous glances. They, of course, gazed at him from the top of the sky-scrapping houses. A bit earlier than our period, we find the ladies of the harem of Mahabharagupta I Janamejaya (C.950 - 975 A.D.) observing Purdah in Orissa. The Kathasarit-sagara also tells that when Udayana entered Kausambi with Vasavadatta and Padmavati, some ladies peeped out at them from the windows, some with their long-lashed eyes closely applied to the lattice of the windows.[53] In the light of Manu's verdict on the unreliable character of women and his exhortation to men to take all possible steps to guard them and also of the evidences quoted by Dr. Mazumdar it seems that Purdah system was present among the Hindus before the advent of Muslims. However, the examples of the dominant Muslims coupled with the desire of the Hindus to give the female members of their families every possible protection against the alien masters, made the practice of living behind the curtain more popular during the period under survey than what it was to be in the ancient times. Moreover, the status of a woman in Hindu society, her functions and the ideas on sexual morality also contributed to the popularity of the Purdah system during this period.

Thus it seems that though the practice of covering their faces was common, it was not observed strictly. It was observed generally by the Hindu ladies of upper and well-to-do classes. Referring to the Hindu women of Gujarat Barbosa says, "These women are kept much at home and shut up. They seldom leave their houses and when go forth they are wrapt up in long garments covering their heads, with the mantles."[54] Hindu ladies of upper classes went on special occasions in covered and well-guarded palanquins or litters which were known as Palkis, Dolis, Chandanls or Hindolas. We find Madhumalati going in a beautiful Chandaul on the occasion of her Gauna ceremony.[55] In Padmavat we find that sixteen hundred Chaudauls (litters) were prepared in which young warriors took seat so that they might be taken for the companions of Padmavati.[56] A moderate and less elaborate form of Purdah commonly known as Ghoonghat was observed by the Hindu ladies of the well-to-do classes during this period. In the Padmavat we find the wife of Badal drawing her veil across her face while talking with her husband.[57] Newly married wives slightly covered their faces with the fold of their garments before their husbands.[58]

The common womenfolk did not lead a secluded life. Many of them had to assist their husbands in agricultural works and to fetch water from well.[59] They used to go to the river for taking their bath.[60] The nature of their work gave them little opportuni to remain in doors. Moreover, their innate modesty would not allo them to gaze at aliens and strangers. So Dr. K.M.Ashraf is right when he says that they moved the lapel of their sari or other head-dress slightly over their faces when they passed by a stranger.[61] Even-to-day this is a common sight in countryside. Hindus adopted purdah as a protective measure[62] to save the honour of their womenfolk and to maintain the purity of their social order.[63]

Like the Muslim Sultans, some of the Hindu Rajas also maintained harem. Harem, a Turkish word, means forbidden or not permitted. But it has been generally employed to denote that part of the house or the palace in which the women lived.[64] In pre-Muslim period the apartments meant for women were known as Antahpura or Ranivas. In contemporary vernacular literature we get several references regarding the Ranivas. In Jayasi's Padmavat we find that the Sinhala king Gandharva sena had sixteen thousand queens in his Ranivas (Harem). Above them was Champavati, the chief queen of exquisite loveliness.[65] Muslim chronicles of the period also mention about the harems of Hindu kings. Isami informs us about the harem of Karan of Patan. He says, "Dawal, a young good-looking girl, exceedingly beautiful and full of grace was taken prisoner along with the whole harem."[66] Referring to the harem of king of Nadiya Minhaj-us-Siraj says that when Bakhtiyar Khalji invaded Nadiya the king Rai Lakhmaniya fled away and all his wives, maidservants, attendants and women fell into the hands of the invader.[67] He also mentions about one Rana called Dalakiwa Malaki whose harem with wives, sons and dependants fell into the hands of Ulugh Khan.[68] From Wassaf we know that the king of Malbar kept a thousand countesans who attended the king in his pleasure.[69] As Hindu Rajas like their Muslim counterparts, lived a highly sensuous and colourful life they maintained women and concubines to keep them engaged in leisure time. However, we have no definite information regarding the organisation of the harem of Hindu Raja.

The Muslim Sultans also maintained harem during the Sultanate period and Hindu ladies entered the harem. Alauddin's marriage with Kamla Devi, the wife of Rai Karan Baghela of Gujarat, and her entry into the harem provides first example of this practice.[70] It was followed by similer marriages of Sultans or Princes with Hindu ladies. It is said that Alauddin married the daughter of Ram Chandra Dev too.[71] He married his son Khizr Khan to Deval Devi, the daughter of Rai Karan.[72] Firoz Tughluq was born of a Rajput lady.[73] Even Sikandar Lodi's mother was a Hindu lady.[74] The entrance of Hindu ladies did not make any outstanding contribution but it suggests that their individuality was suppressed because they were not allowed to exert their influence in any sphere.[75]

As girls were married at an early age, there was very little opportunity for women to have higher education. Female education was restricted due to Purdah system as well.[76] Young girls were taught at home by private tutors.[77] Boys and girls received co-education till only primary standard. Some schools were meant specially for girls.[78] Literacy was probably acquired by the women of genteel society. In Jayasi's Padmavat we find Padmavati acquiring the knowledge of all the four Vedas. She could read Bhasvati Jyotisha, Vyakarana, Pingala and Puranas. Pandits could not surpass her at interpreting the Amarkosa, Mahabharata, Pingala and the Gita. She was well versed in music also.[79] In M Jayasi's Chitrarekha the heroine becomes a Pandit due to the teaching of so many teachers.[80] The age produced Mira Bai, one of the best representatives of Hindu culture, who wrote Narayan Mohra, Geet Govinda's Tika or commentary, Raj Govinda, Mira Ka Pada and Garba Geet.[81] Ratnawali, the wife of Puran Mal, possessed great poetic talents.[82]

Girls had little freedom even in parents' home. They had to live under many restrictions. They could not go out without the permission of their parents. In Manjhan's

Madhumalati, we find that when Prema wanted to go out for playing, her mother did not allow her.[83] Unmarried girls used to be apprehensive about the behaviour of their future husbands and in-laws. They had the fear of the harsh words of mother-in-laws and sister-in-laws. They were not sure whether they would get comforts or troubles from their husbands.[84]

As a wife she had to please all members of her husband's family by rendering every possible domestic services. In addition to that she had to manage household affairs. It was her duty to serve her husband because her happiness depended upon it.[85] Ratansena advised his two wives - Nagmati and Padmavati - to serve him and out of it, enjoy happiness and bliss.[86] Sometimes the new bride had to bear the pin-pricks of her mother-in-law and sister-in-law.[87] In Madhumalati we find Rupa Manjari advising her daughter Madhumalati to tolerate the harsh words of her mother-in-law with equanimity.[88] From one of the letters of Likhnavali we learn that the relation of the new bride was sometimes not happy with nanad (husband's sister).[89] Sometimes conjugal life was not happy. In the above mentioned letter mother advises her daughter to bear patiently the ill-treatment of her husband. Generally the relation between the Sautans (wives of the same husband) was not good. We find

Padmavati and Nagmati wives of king Ratansena fighting with each other.[90]

Whatever be the plight of a new bride, when grown up and away from the dominating influence of her mother-in-law a middle class lady had large powers in the management of the household. Alberuni says that in all consultations and emergencies they take the advice of women.[91] She would control the expenditure of the house and supervise the general arrangement of the kitchen, and furniture and perform periodical religious and secular functions.[92] While going to enrol his son in the school, we find Kalu, the father of Guru Nanak, asking his wife for some money.[93] Thus the position of a wife in Hindu family was that of honourable subordination. Manu gives a very honoured and important place to the wife in the life of a man. He observes, "Between wives who are destined to bear children, who secure many blessings, who are worthy of worship and irradiate the dwellings and between the goddess of fortune in the house, there is no difference whatsoever. Of the production of children, of the nurture of those born and of the daily life of men, women are visibly the cause offsprings, the due performance of religiou rites, faithful service, highest conjugal happiness and heavenly bliss for the ancestors and oneself, depend on one's wife alone."[94] Digests of the period like Parasara-Madhaviya enjoins upon the husbands to maintain their wives and makes them liable to punishment for abondoning their chaste and gentle wives.[95] Another digest recommends that even the wicked wife should be given maintenance in the shape of bad food and so forth.[96] Whatever might have been the respective position of wife and husband in a Hindu family, it is a fact that most of the Hindus managed to lead a happy domestic life. In Jayasi's Padmavat we find deep love and affection between Padmavati and her husband Ratansena. Ahmadyadgar informs us about a Hindu couple of village Palam who were in deep love with each other.[97] As Hindus were mostly monogamous, the love and affection of the husband to his wife was unfailing. Tavernier, who visited India in 17th century A.D. observes that the Banias (Hindus) when married are seldom untrue to their wives.[98]

Whatever might have been the position of a woman as a daughter and wife, she certainly occupied a most respectable position in Hindu society as a mother. While criticising the women for their demerits, Manjhan in his Madhumalati recognises the exalted position of woman as a mother.[99] Hindu Sastrakaras have laid great emphasis on the venerable position of mother. Manu emphatically declares that she is a thousand times more honourable than the father.[100] It is further noted that mothers are to be regarded as the first and best preceptors of children.[101] Ksemendra tells us that the mother's position was superior to that of Guru.[102] During the period under review, from the king down to the peasant, all had the greatest respect for their mothers. Perhaps no people showed greater regard for their mothers than the Rajputs. We find the best illustration of her respect in the ever a recurring simile "make thy mother's milk resplendent." Many Rajput kings had made it a principle to pay their respects to their mothers every morning and before dinner.[103] Thus mother occupied a high position in Hindu family of the period under review. Even to-day her superior position is indisputable. People take oath by the name of mother.

However, the position of woman as a widow was most wretched in Hindu society; especially among the members of higher castes. According to Alberuni, the widow had no right to remarry. Either she had to remain a widow as long as she lived or to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband.[104] The contemporary digests also disapprove the remarriage of widow and inculcate upon the widow the obligation of self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband.[105] The latter practice was known as Sati about which we will discuss in the next chapter under the heading 'Sati'. Those widows who did not opt for Sati led a miserable life. Ibn Battuta says that a widow who does not burn herself dresses in coarse garments and lives with her people in misery, dispised for her lack of fidelity.[106] Alberuni also informs that the widow was ill-treated so long as she lived. Even today widows lead a miserable life. It seems that widows of lower castes could remarry.

Besides Sati an equally dreadful yet much revered custom was that of Jauhar which indicates the deplorable condition of women in Hindu society. When a Rajput chief was reduced to despair in a campaign he used to confine the ladies and children of his family in his building which was afterwards set on fire. We will also discuss about Jauhar in the next chapter under the heading 'Jauhar'.

During the sultanate period literary evidences are overwhelming about prostitution being a prevalent practice among Hindus. The prostitutes were called Nartaki, Veshya, Ganika etc. and these find mention in contemporary Vernacular literature. Prostitution was known in India from ancient times. Both in North and South India temples maintained girls known as Devadasis who used to sing and dance before the deities. Referring to prostitution Alberuni observes, "People think with regard to harlotry that it is allowed with them .... The Hindus are not very severe in punishing whoredom. The fault, however, in this lies with the kings, not with the nation. But for this, no Brahman or priest would suffer in their idol-temples the women who sing, dance and play. The kings make them an attraction for their cities, a bait of pleasure for their subjects, for no other but financial reasons. By the revenues which they derive from the business both as fines and taxes, they want to recover the expenses which their treasury has to spend on the army."[107] Syed Nur-ud-din Mubarak Ghaznavi, the great ecclesiastic, who flourished in the time of Sultan Shams-ud-din Iltutmish, is reported to have allowed the prostitutes to practice their profession in their own quarters provided they did not carry on in public. Such a practice was allowed to continue so that many rascals driven by their sex-impulse might be prevented from attacking harems.[108] During the reign of Ala-ud-din

Khalji the ever-increasing number of prostitutes became so alarming that some of them were given in marriage to relieve the profession from congestion. Referring to it Amir Khusrau says, "All prostitutes, who with their locks under their ears, had broken their chains and stretched their feet, have now been lawfully married. From the ribbon, that tied their hair, they have now turned to the 'ribbon' that ties them in marriage. Those whose skirts had obtained a bad reputation, because they earned their living by prostitution, have now been so reformed that they sit in their houses, patching up their skirts with the greatest repentence and rubbing their hands together."[109] Ala-ud-din Khalji fixed the tariff of wages for public women and circulated an order prohibiting them from raising their charges above the scheduled rates.[110] Vidyapati, who flourished in the 15th century, has also given us a detailed description of the beautiful public women of Jaunpur in his book Kirtilata. He says that the prostitutes there used to maintain their livelihood through immoral means and the people depended on them fo the satisfaction of their sexual urge. They flocked to the markets and induced other young maidens to join their professio

Their shame was unnatural and their youth was artificial. Prostitutes, who had no husbands, used vermillion. Under the patronage of Sultan Ibrahim Shah the prostitutes had a happy and prosperous life.[111] Jayasi, in his Padmavat, has also referred to the public women of Sinhala who sat in balconies to attract men by their various accomplishments. They entertained the visitors with dance and music so long as they had money in their pockets. After this they did not even recognise them.[112] Thus prostitutio was alegalised social evil during the period under review and it is still continuing inspite of several laws passed by the government for its abolition.

Though Muslim writers are silent, we find from the contemporary digests like Parasara-Madhaviya, Madana-Parijata and Vivadaratnakara, etc. that some improvement took place in the position of Hindu women so far as the punishment for their crimes and their property rights are concerned. The Smritis had prescribed capital punishment for women for certain types of crimes such as adultery. But the contemporary digest-writers frequently make references to the humane rule of Katyayana that women are liable to half the fine payable by men, and that they are to lose a limb where the men are punished with death.[113]

As with the coming of the Muslims the implementation of the Smriti laws regarding punishment had become 'largely a matter of academic interest,' it appears that the contemporary authors of Hindu religious texts were more favourably inclined towards women for they have prescribed 'half the penance for women as compared with men.'[114] Women were exempted from tonsuring their heads.[115] Although women of the three upper classes (Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya), conceiving as a result of illicit intercourse with a Ṡudra paramour, cannot be purified and must be abondoned, a woman doing so by connection with a man of another caste is purified by penance and a woman guilty of unchastity, not resulting in conception, is purified by the appropriate penance.[116] Madhavacharya even argues that as the land contaminated by the residence of chandalas is reclaimed by the operations of digging the soil, so a woman, having an illicit connection with a chandala, can be reclaimed by the performance of vows.[117]

However, the most important development in the position of Hindu women of the period is their property rights. According to chandesvara, the father should make his wives equal sharers, according ~~to~~ as he gives equal or unequal shares to his son.[118]

The widow's right as the foremost heir of a deceased sonless male divided from his family, which was first conceded by Yajnavalkya and Vishnu, is repeatedly vindicated by the authors of Vyavahara Vivekoddyota,[119] and Parasara-Madhaviya.[120] Where the husband has died divided and not reunited, the wife is entitled to entire property, both movable and immovable.[121] The women's dominion over her Stridhana is completely recognised by our digest-makers of the period. The wife is free to dispose of her Saudayika property, comprising both movables and immovables, by gift or sale at her will.[122]

Though we find some formidable changes in the attitude of Hindu digest-makers of the period towards women, we do not notice any marked change in the overall position of Hindu women from the informations supplied by Muslim writers. Their position from birth to death, was one of perpetual dependence upon male members of their family, as it is even today. Denial of right in the selection of their life-partners,the wretched condition of widows, institutions of Purdah and prostitutions,dreadful customs of Sati and Jauhar tell a lot about the pitiable condition of women in Hindu Society.

FOOTNOTES

1. Early History of Institutions by Henry Maine, p. 339.

2. The Laws of Manu, Ch.V, Secs. 147-149 as quoted in the Sacred Books of the East (ed. by F.Max Muller), Vol. XXXV, Oxford, 1886, p. 195.

3. Ibid., Ch. VII, Sec. 125, p. 236.

4. Harshavardhan by G.S.Chatterji, p. 87; The wonder that was India by A.L.Basham, p. 91.

5. The position of women in Hindu Civilization by A.S.Altekar, p. 187.

6. Ibid., p. 182; Journal of Indian History, Vol. 17 (1938),p.24.

7. Life in Gupta Age by R.N.Saletone, p. 182.

8. History of Medieval India by C.V. Vaidya,Vol.I, p. 6.

9. Arthasastra, Tr. p. 327; Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan by K.M.Ashraf, p. 245.

10. Hindu Social Organisation by P.N.Prabhu, pp. 257-58; J.I.H., Vol. 17, p. 25.

11. Great Women of India by Madhavanand and Majumdar, p. 30.

12. Harsha by R.K.Mukerji, pp. 193-194; Madhyakaleen Bhartiya Sanskriti by P.N. Ojha, p. 53.

13. Rajputana Ka Itihas by P.N.Ojha, Vol. I, p. 77.

14. Madhyayugin Hindi Sahitya Me Nari Bhawana,by Usha Pandey,p.13.

15. Hindu Civilization by Radha Kumud Mukerji, p. 27.

16. Women in ancient India by C.Bander, p. 63.

17. Hindustan Ki Purani Sabhyata, by Beni Prasad, p. 50.

18. Hindu Civilization by R.K.Mukerji, p. 72.

19. The position of women in Hindu civilization, by A.S. Altekar, p. 58.

20. Women in Rigved, by Bhagvat Sharan Upadhyay, p. 92.

21. Hindu Civilization by R.K.Mukerji, p.73.

22. The position of Women in Hindu Civilization, by A.S. Altekar, p. 323.

23. Ibid., p. 233-234.

24. Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, by A.S.Altekar, p.411; Hindustan Ki Purani Sabhyata by Beni Prasad,p.103.

25. Madhyayugin Hindi Sahitya Me Nari Bhavana, by Usha Pandey, p. 17.

26. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

27. Ibid., p. 22.

28. Kalidasyugin Bharat by Bhagvat Sharan Upadhyay,p.127-28.

29. Position of Women in Hindu Civilization by A.S.Altekar,p.281

30. Ideal and Position of Indian Women in Social Life : Great Women of India, by A.S.Altekar, p. 42-43.

31. The Status of Women in Ancient India by Indra, p. 68.

32. Ibid., I, p. 461.

33. The Status of Women in Ancient India, by Indra, p. 76; Some Aspects of Social Life in Ancient India by S.Mukerji, p. 127.

34. Women in ancient India by C.Vander, p. 465.

35. Kalidasyugin Bharat by Bhagvat Sharan Upadhyay, p. 127.

36. Position of Women in Hindu Civilization,by A.S.Altekar, p. 146.

37. Madhyayugin Hindi Sahitya Me Nari Bhavana by Usha Pandey, p. 25.

38. Altekar, p. 3; Hopkins, p. 284; Basham, p. ~~126~~ 161; Tod, I, pp. 504-5.

39. Women in Delhi Sultanate by Lokesh Chandra Nand, p. 2.

40. Altekar,p.4; Sexual life in Ancient India by J.J.Mayer,p.7.

41. Women in Delhi Sultanate by Lokesh Chandra Nand, p. 3.

42. The Status of Women in Ancient India by Indra, pp. 27-29.

43. Some Aspects of Social Life in Ancient India by S.Mukerji, pp. 106-108.

44. The Social and Military Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India by Hopkins, p. 279; The Status of Women in Ancient India by Indra, p. 88.

45. Hopkins, pp. 310-11; Indra, pp. 88-89.

46. Hopkins, p. 51.

47. History of Medieval Civilization, Tr.M.Habib,pp. 77-78.

48. Altekar, pp. 167-170; Indra, p. 73.

49. Altekar,pp. 172-173.

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52. Society and Culture in Medieval India by A.Rashid, 1969, pp. 141-142.

53. B.P.Mazumdar, op.cit., p. 141.

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55. Madhumalati, p. 164.

56. Padmavat, p. 831.

57. Ibid., p. 823.

58. Ibid., p. 355.

59. Fuwaid-ul-Fuwad, p. 178.

60. Tarikh-i-Shahi (Bibliotheca Indica) by Ahmad Yadgar,p.104.

61. Life and Conditions of the people of Hindustan, by K.M. Ashraf, op.cit., p. 139.

62. The Spirit of Indian Civilization, pp. 163-64.

63. Harem and the Purdah by Elizabeth Cooper, p. 65.

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65. Padmavat, p. 57.

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68. Ibid., p. 348.

69. Ibid., Vol. III, p.53.

70. Deval Rani Khizr Khan by Amir Khusrau, p. 172.

71. Futuh-us-Salatin by Isami (Khilji Kalaen Bharat), p. 173.

72. Deval Rani Khizr Khan by Amir Khusrau, p. 173.

73. Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi by Affif, p. 54.

74. Makhzan-i-Afghana by Niamatullah, Tr., p.24.

75. Sanjay Sinha Thesis, p. ....

76. Promotion of Learning in India by N.N. Law, p. 201.

77. Education in Muslim India by Jaffar, p. 192.

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82. Khan,A.A., op.cit., p. 167.

83. Madhumalati, p. 61.

84. Padmavat, p. 70

85. Madhumalati, p. 152.

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87. Ibid., p. 70.

88. Madhumalati, p. 152.

89. Thakur, Vidyapati, Letter No. 36

90. Padmavat, p. 556.

91. Sachau, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 181.

92. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p. 396.

93. Macauliff, Sikh Religion, Vol. I, pp. 2-3.

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106. Travels in Asia and Africa by Ibn Battuta, p. 191.

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109. The campaigns of Alauddin Khalji, by Muhammad Habib,Madras, p. 11.

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112. Padmavat, pp. 44-45.

113. The Delhi Sultanate, p. 593.

114. Parasara-Madhaviya, Vol. III, pp.29, and 34.

115. Madana-Parijata, p. 870.

116. Parasara-Madhaviya,Vol.III, pp. 115-16.

117. Ibid., p. 280.

118. Vivadaratnakara, Ed. by Kamala Krishna Smrititirtha, Bibliotheca Indica, 1931, p. 65.

119. Vyavahara Vivekoddyota, pp. 359-63.

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121. Vyavahara Vivekoddyota, pp. 359-63.

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CHAPTER - II

HAREM AND HINDU WOMEN

The women's apartment of an eastern king, in the common perlance of Western historians, is known as Seraglio or haram. The word "haram" is of Arabic origin, a verbal noun, meaning sacred. In pre-Islamic Arabia a cube-like structure (Kabah) of primitive simplicity was encircled by a sacred territory (haram) at Makkah. After the advent of Islam, Kabah became the centre of Muslim devotion. The sanctity of the place became a matter of the greatest importance to the devotees of the new religion. Thither the followers of Islam thronged every year to perform their annual pilgrimage and revive the tradition of Ibrahim.

It is difficult to say precisely how the word assumed the modern terminology and how it came to be applied to the women's apartment of the household of an eastern king. Even in early Persian poetry the word "haram" is used for Kabah.[1] Somehow or other it came to be used in the women's apartment in the life of a Muslim after the segregation of the sexes came into vague.

Other historians also agree that the Turkish word 'Harem' is derived from Arabic 'Haruma', normally meaning thereby forbidd not permitted or illegal, but at the same time wholly protected and inviolate.[2] No other word has been used with so little regard for its meaning as the word 'Harem', since it has been generally employed to denote that part of the house or the palace in which the women lived.[3] The harem at that time signified mainly the totality of the female inmates, than those who were excluded from the view of the public. The seraglio included other women besides the wives and the concubines of the ruler. Among them were included their mothers, sisters and other female relations. No definite idea has yet been formed about the organisation of the royal harem. The royal harem was supervised from within by a regular hakima or governess belonging to a noble family and from without by a Khavaja-Sarai (The chief eunuch) whose office was considered as one of great trust and responsibility.[4] Some sort of Harem or Seraglio was also maintained by the Hindu Rajas even during the pre-Muslim period. During the time of Harsha, for example, the apartments meant for women were called Vasara, Antahpura or Ranivas. It is just possible that in these quarters eunuchs were employed along with guards.[5]

Women played an important part in the life of a monarch in India as early as the Mauryan age. Most of the work in the palace was done by them, such as cooking the food, bringing the wine and guarding the person of the king. In fact two or three armed women protected the king when he was in his seraglio. Women in considerable numbers also accompanied him on his hunting expeditions. They rode on elephants and in chariots fully armed, "as if they were going on a military expeditions."[6] During the Gupta period the tradition of maintaining women servants to serve the king was continued. They held his umbrella of royalty, waved the chauri and sang songs. Besides these, courtesans were also employed for the sake of light entertainment.[7] In the 7th century A.D. we find some traces of the Pardah system, but on a minor scale.[8]

The seraglio of the king was named Antahpura or Antah-Vasara in the reign of Harsha as said earlier. Admission into it was considered a criminal offence except on the day a prince was born.[9] A keeper of the door called Pratihararaksi or Avarodharaksa kept a watch over the gate of the harem.[10] Only Kanchukis (domestic servants), Pratiharis (door guards) and shrats were permitted to enter.[11] Ordinarily the king had many wives who committed Sati after his death, that is to say, polygamy was practised. Besides them, the royal palace also contained many female servants.[12]

During the 10th and 11th centuries artificiality played an important part in the life of the upper class. Some idea of the condition in the royal household can be formed from indirect evidences that are furnished by the descriptions of fashionable women at the court.[13]

The haram under the Sultanate period "signified the totality of the female inmates, who were excluded from the view of the public." The purdah existed in a minor form even before the advent of the Turks, but the institutional and "the more developed form of the purdah, with its elaborate code of rules, came into existence from the beginning of the Muslim rule."[14] It was prevelent among the Ghaznavides in India. Radia's case was an exception. Firuz's order forbidding women's visit to the tombs of the saints further tightened the claw. Bythe end of his rule the custom had spread to the provinces as well.[15] The question of non-forbidden (Mahram) and forbidden (non-mahram) also became very formidable, so much so that Muhammad bin Tughluq "was very scrupulous when he entered his haram that his eyes did not fall upon a non-mahram."[16]

The Sultans kept a large harem. "Women and concubines occupied much of their time."[17] The Seraglio included other women besides the wives and concubines of the ruler as told earlier. Among them were included their mothers, sisters and other female relations. No definite idea has yet been formed about the organisation of the royal haram during this period. It seems that the internal administration was not so elaborately chalked out as in the reign of Akbar, who placed it on a systematic basis. We gather that a governess (hakimah), who belonged to a noble family, supervised the haram from within and the Khawajah-Sarais (eunuchs) from without.[18] Purdah being observed strictly, faithful eunuchs and maids, with a hundred other male and female servants, provided the domestic staff.[19] This much is alone clear to prove that the haram did not play any important part in the political life of the realm.[20]

In our period of review the haram portion in the palace of the emperor is called Mahal both by the chroniclers of the time and the European travellers. Abul Fazl has given it a more appropriate name - Shabistan-i-Iqbal or Shabistan-i-Khas. The

Emperor never stayed permanently at the capital. He led important expeditions, and he went on pleasure trips to different parts of the country. Thus he had to spend a part of his journey under the canvas. The haram usually followed him had to be accommodated in the camp. Their respective quarters at the station and in the camp form the two different aspects of the Mughal haram life.

To the women of the Imperial Household was alloted quite a big portion of the palace. It lay within easy reach of the emperor. It accommodated a large number of women, from a queen to an ordinary maid-servant. It contained morethan five thousand persons (paradahgiyan) in the reign of Akbar. Each member of the royal family was assigned a separate apartment for her stay.[21] By the time of Aurangzeb their number seems to have increased considerably, for the numerical strength of menial servants alone was calculated to be about two thousand besides matrons and others.[22]

The seraglio of the emperor contained many beautiful apartments, separate, spacious and splendid, according to the ranks of the inmates. Each chambers had its own reservoir of running water, garden, delightful alleys and fountains.[23] The queen and princess seldom went out of their quarters except on a visit to a relative with the emperor.[24] They mostly passed their time in their rooms.[25] The Mahal was well guarded by male and female guards. All its gates were closed at sunset and sealed, except the principal gate which was kept open and "minutely guarded."[26]

At Fatehpur Sikri the quarters of Maryam Makanni and other ladies of the haram were situated to the south-west and south of the Diwan-i-khas.[27]

An elaborate description of the haram apartment can be found in the accounts of the reigns of Jehangir and Shahjehan. The Agra Fort contained the quarters of Bilqis Makani (Jahangir' mother), Nur Jehan and a Bengali Mahal "where the ladies of various nations resided." Three of the mahals in the Lahore For are described by Finch. The first was "a small" double-storeyed building on the side of the river, each storey containing eight fair lodgings for several women." The second was a square edifi with stately accommodation for 200 women. The third, the stateliest of the three, contained sixteen "great lodgings" comprising a diwan khanah, "a small paved court and a pond," thus providing the inmates "a little world of pleasure and state." The decoration consisted of Alleppo mirrors hung against and pictures painted on the walls. Surprisingly enough, the doors of the rooms "could only be fastened from outside and none from within."

The magnificence and the delicacy of the buildings in the Delhi Fort, with its enchanting gardens and dazzling exuberance of gold plated walls, is a thing of the past. All the ravages of time except Imtiyaz Mahal and Rang Mahal which stand a naked monument of wanton destruction and loot by the invaders. Of these two, the former gives an insight into the luxurious and pompous lives of the Mughal ladies. In the words of the court historian, "in excellence and glory" it surpassed "the eight-sided heaven," and "in lustre and colour" was "far superior to the palaces in the promised paradise." It contained a big hall whose ceiling and a part of the wall were studded with plates of gold and were ornamented with gilded decorations in the shape of conventional flowers. Within it were also constructed two inner varandahs (tambi kahanah 11 x 6 dharas) and four rooms (7 x 5 dharas). A branch of the famous Nahr-i-Bahisht flowed in the middle, passing through a small but beautifully carved marble pond. Its garden was enclosed with a red stone screen, which was decorated at the top with 2,000 gold plated knobs (qubbah-i-tila amud).[28]

The quarters of the princesses, though smaller in structure, were not inferior in execution. The residence of Shahzadah Begam Saheb, the supposed child of Shahjehan, is described by a contemporary writer in glowing terms.[29]

The Mughal camp was a well planned city of canvas with the emperor's quarters situated in the middle on a raised ground. Within the imperial quarters, a fixed site was alloted to the Shabistan-i-Khas, whose area never measured less than 100 square yards. Thus on the march, the royal haram, excluding the camp of the emperor's mother, was situated within the Gulalbar.[30] The arrangement of tents within the Gulalbar was more or less in the following order :

On the far eastern side was pitched the Bargah, enclosed by the Sarapardah, in the middle a Chawbin Rawti and towards the western end the Do-ashyanah Manzil. On the vacant ground to the right and left were erected 24 Chawbin rawtis, "for the chosen ones of the garden of empire" each separated from the other by a "qanat" (screen of cloth). By the side of these, rawtis, Kharagahs and Khimahs were pitched, tents for the chief office holders of the haram, who are called Khasan by Abul Fazl. All of them were bedecked with shades (Shamyanah) of Velvet, brocade and gold cloth. Adjoining these tents, situated in between the Mahtabi and the Shabistan-i-Khas, on either side of the forty-yard broad passage, lay two enclosures in which the tents of the Urdu Baigis (women guards) and other female servants of the haram were pitched. The order of the tents, within this enclosure, was arranged according to the ranks of the ladies concerned.

Further west, by the side of the Shabistan-i-Khas, upto the Abchaki, lay a fine open space (150 x 100 yards) screened on all sides by the Sarachah. It was called Mahatabi. In the centre of it was erected a platform (Suffah), protected at the top by a four-pillared canopy (nimgirah). The emperor usually spent his evenings under it, and none but those particularly favoured (Khasan) were admitted. Outside the Gulalbar were posted guards (Kishkdar), who kept watch and allowed none to enter the forbidden zone.

Behind the Shabistan-i-Khas, a hundred yards thence, were pitched the tents of the emperor's mother if ever she accompanied her son on the march.[31] To each apartment was attached a room for ablutions, which was called Sihat Khanah (the abode of good health) by Akbar.

The haram organisation of the Mughals was based on the same pattern as the outside administration of the emperor's household. There were two types of the haram staff, firstly females and eunuchs, and secondly male servants, who served under the Khan Saman outside, such as Nazirs and other officers, who also dealt with haram matters. Within the haram walls a complete staff of female officers and eunuchs managed the whole show. Akbar "from the dust of obscurity" elevated many "faithful persons to several ranks in the services of the seraglio."[32]The selection was carefully made because the female thus chosen possessed "much wit and judgement," knowing all about the affairs of the state.[33] Each of these was assigned a separate apartment (judaganah manzili) in the mahal. They were divided into diverse sections (jug), their duties and offices being clearly defined.[34]

Broadly speaking, the female employees of the harem were divided into three main sections, the high (mahin Banu), the middling (paristarani-hudur) and the low. The first two grades were the superior staff of the mahal whom Manucci calls "Matrons".[35] Those of the first grade occupied "the same office that is held by the grandees outside." They communicated the emperor's orders out of the haram walls, read out to him all important reports that were sent in by the officers of the state, and recited to him the accounts of the news-writers (Waqia-nawis) and secret agents (Khufyahnawis). In fact, they supervisedthe administration inside the mahal. From them were probably selected those who held the posts of mahaldars and wakils, posts whose influence was immense. The names of two of them who wielded great power, have come down to us - Sati Khanim and Nur-al-Nisa.[36] Some of them were so well educated that they were appointed to teach the princesses.[37] From the second grade were recruited the Daroghahs (supervisors), who supervised the work of each section, the Mushrif, the Tahwildar and other petty officials.[38] The lowest section, that is to say the menials, were of two types,slaves and free. Among the former were included the females who were brought as presents or were bought in the market. They were given appropriate names "that suited the person in gesture or speech or gait or acts." They were paid in the same manner as the other slaves.[39] The latter category was recruited from the families of the soldiers and other inhabitants of the city.[40] Towards the end of the 17th century, Kashmiri women were employed to stand at the doors of the mahal. Their duty was "to carry away and bring back anything that was necessary." They kept themselves unveiled.[41] Besides these, a host of women were employed to entertain the women of the seraglio.[42] Women astrologers cast horoscopes and satisfied the astrological fancies of the ladies. Once a pearl worth Rs. 1,500 was stolen from the haram apartment. The prophecy of a woman astrologer that within two or three days it would be recovered and that a white-skinned women would place it in the hands of His Majesty, came true.[43]

Whenever anything was required by the inmates of the haram, they got cash for it within the limits of their monthly allowance. The procedure adopted was quite complicated.[44]

The discipline among the servants was maintained rigorously. Any misconduct on their part was punished. severely. For instance one of the woman servants was caught misbehaving with a eunuch. She was "set into an arm pit," her feet into stakes, bare-headed, without food for three days and two nights. The eunuch was condemned to the elephant.[45]

As regards the period of leave from service, the "khasan" (those of the first grade) were entitled to be relieved of their duties for a whole month, while the wives of the soldiers were granted privilege leave of seven days in a month.[46]

Despotism needs armed protection, and thus the emperor's palace as well as his quarters in the camp were guarded by trustworthy men and women, protection being especially needed when he slept. For the sake of his own safety and the protection of the ladies, which was necessitated by their secluded life, men and women guards were stationed at a number of posts in the royal palace and the Gulalbar. The interior was guarded by brave, skilled, sober and active women, well-versed in the use of bows and arrows. The exterior and the doors leading to the harem were guarded by faithful eunuchs. Great care was taken that no undesirable element should enter the seraglio. All gates were closed at sunset except the main entrance where sentinals were placed. Torches were kept burning, all traffic was closely checked and everything happening inside was reported to the nazir by the servants and the spies. The approaches to the seraglio were guarded by the Rajputs, a custom which originated from Akbar's reign and continued upto the first quarter of the 18th century. They defended the honour of the Mughal women in the same manner as the honour of their own women. This is amply illustrated by an incident of Aurangzeb's reign when Jahan Banu Begam's camp was attacked by the Marathas and was defended with fanatical courage by the Rajputs under Anurudh Singh. For his gallantry and for the sacrifice of his followers he was suitabily rewarded by the Begam, who took off her own pearl necklace and placed it round the neck of the defender of her honour with her own hands.[47] Every twenty-four hours the men and women guards of the palace changed their duties.[48] Whenever the wives of some nobles or Begams desired to visit the harem, they had to notify first to the servants of the seraglio. Then they sent their request to the officers of the palace after which, those, who were eligible were permitted to enter the harem. At the time of audience most of the men in attendance on the person of the emperor retired to another room.[49] Whenever an unknown women wanted to enter the seraglio she was searched "without respect to position or rank." This was mainly done as a precaution against the entry of men in the garb of women.[50]

Generally the activities of women centered around household affairs and their participation in public and political sphere was not much welcomed.[51] Probably it was due to the fact that women were considered fickle and incompetent to keep secrets that they were considered unfit to participate in public affairs.[52] Even Buddha who tried to enhance the status of women gave no latitude to women for interfering in statecraft.[53] However, while in theory the women played no role in the affair of the state, indirectly their presence was amply felt in these matters. Draupadi, Kunti, Kaushlya are but a few instances of how the chief queens dominated the rulers. Sometimes these ambitious ladies interfered in political activities by ruling in their husband's name and often eclipsing their husband who became a mere rubber stamp.[54] In the seventh century Yuan Chwang mentions two strirajyas (women's kingdoms), the one in the east and the other in the west. The former one which was known as "Eastern Women's country" was so called because it was ruled "by a succession of women."[55] The other named the "West Women's country" is mentioned also by Varahamihira. Each of its valleys had its own government, and the principality as a whole was subject to Persia.[56]

The other manner in which women entered the political arena was when they acted as regents and ruled the empire when the rightful heir was a minor.[57] Rajput queen-mothers who exploited this opportunity by taking up the reigns of the Government were Maha Laxmi, Raja Allatt's mother and Hasus Bai, Mokal's mother.[58] Sobhagya Devi[59] and Karpura Devi[60] too executed their ambitious designs, while they acted as regents of the heir apparent.

During the administration of the kingdom the queens had often to take recourse to arms,' leading armies to crush rebellions and expanding the boundaries of the empire.[61] The queen of Masaga was directing the attack against Alexander the Great when her husband was killed in the battle with the invader. In the second century B.C. queen Nayanika was at the head of the administration of the extensive Satavahana empire of the Deccan during the minority of her son. In the fourth century A.D. Prabhavatigupta was directing the Vakataka administration in Madhya Pradesh for more than ten years after her husband's death as the queen Regent for her minor son.[62] In the eighth century R Rani Bai, the sister of Dahir, vigorously fought against the Arab General Muhammad-ibn-Qasim, at the head of her soldiers, after the death of her husband in the battle and burnt herself to death when she saw no chance of success.[63] The contribution of Didda, Sugandha, Suryamati for their Kingdom remainsunsurpassed in the History of Kashmiri Didda, the widow Ksemavarman rose to prominence even in the midst of an atmosphere of conspiracy against her. By dint of her statesmanship she succeeded in suppressing the rising of all her opponents and in averting all crisis threatening her royal power.[64] In Medieval Kashmir queen Sugandha was actively governing the country after the death of Sankaravarman. It appears that the women were fully accustomed to the various strategies of war and use of weapons. There are historical accounts of many heroic deeds of women warriors who sacrificed everything in defending the kingdom. Queen Naikidevi of Gujarat and Kumaradevi of Mavada gave tough resistance to the attacks of Muhammad Ghori and Qutubuddin respectively.[65] This shows that since childhood some sort of military training was imparted to them.[66] For this very reason many women who attained perfection and skill carved out a niche for themselves and their valour deserves much praise.[67] We find reference of women guards under Chandragupta Maurya which speaks of their heroic deeds.[68]

During the Sultanate period Hindu ladies also entered the harem. Alauddin's marriage with Kamla Devi and her entry into the harem provides first example of this practice.[69] It was followed by similar marriages of sultans or princes with Hindu ladies. It is said that Alauddin married the daughter of Ram Chandra Dev too.[70] He married his son Khizr Khan to Deval Devi, daughter of Rai Karan.[71] Firoz Tughluq was born of a Rajput lady.[72] Even Sikandar Lodi's mother was a Hindu lady.[73] But Sultans did not take Hindu women in confidence. Therefore, the entrance of these ladies into Harem did not make any outstanding contribution or influence in politics. Their even individuality was suppressed. They were not allowed to exert influence in any political,social or cultural sphere. The reason was that sultans had not yet learnt to appreciate the importance of a composite culture. Despite all these things, Hindu women influenced the administration and played a significant role in politics even during the Sultanate period. During the Lodi period, Bibi Ambha, the daughter of a Hindu goldsmith and the wife of Sultan Bahlol Lodi also played an important role in the political life. She was an accomplished woman known for her charm and pleasant manners.[74] Her long black hair and rosy cheeks stole the heart of prince Bahlol Lodi who was then the governor of Sirhind.[75] Though she was a Hindu girl but after his accession to the throne Sultan Bahlol Lodi married her.[76] Along with beauty Bibi Ambha had a sharp intellect. She took part in politics by pressing the claims of her son to the throne after the death of Sultan Bahlol Lodi. She opposed Isa Khan Lodi (son of Tater Khan Lodi) and pleaded the nobles to extend their support in favour of her son, Nizam Khan (Sultan Sikander Lodi). It was through tact and perseverence that Bibi Ambha got the support of the nobles. She easily suppressed the opposition and won the throne for her son.[77]

The lady who played an important role in politics during Mughal period was Rani Karmavati, a wife of RanaSanga. She exercised considerable influence over her husband and manipulated to get huge jagirs for her sons Vikram and Uda and also pushed their claims for the throne of Mewar. She also entered into secret communications with Babur ahd sought his help in establishing the claims of her sons but she could not get an encouraging response from the Mughal emperor.[78] She also wanted to make cordial relations with Humayun and to seek help when Bahadur

Shah of Gujarat invaded Chittor. But she could not get any substantial help from him.[79] Ultimately she had to purchase peace from Bahadur Shah by offering Malwa along with a huge sum of money, a number of horses and elephants.[80] The trouble was averted only for the time being. The deteriorating political condition of Mewar under Vikram encouraged Bahadur Shah who made a second attack at Chittor in 1535 A.D. Rani Karnavati made the last bid to protect the fort, assembled the Rajput nobles and offered stiff resistance to the forces of Bahadur Shah but the artillery of Bahadur Shah under Rumi Khan proved too devastating to be faced. Defeat started in the very face of the Rajputs. The Rani performed Jauhar and the fort was captured by Bahadur Shah on March 8,1535 A.D.[81] Still she had been remembered as a mediocre personality. She reduced the reputation of Mewar and its ruling house to the lowest ebb. Karnavati showed energy and ideas but her policy was confused and based on narrow self-interest. She could not understand that Humayun possessed no chivalry or magnanimity for non-Muslims however brave and deserving.[82]

Outside the Mughal harem, the Hindu women who played a significant role during this period was Durgavati, commonly known as Rani.[83] She was the daughter of Raja Salbahan of Ratha and Mahoba and was married to Dalpat, the son of Amar Das.[84] After the death of her husband in 1548 A.D. she became the regent of her son Bir Narain and ruled at Garha by exercising real authority.[85] She was distinguished for courage, counsel and munificence and by virtue of these qualities was able to exercise her sway over the country. No rebellion or uprising took place during the period of her ascendancy. She had 23,000 villages in her possession. Out of these, for 12,000 she appointed 'resident governors' (Shiqdars) and the rest were under her direct control, their headmen being under her subordination.[86] Her country was better administered and more prosperous than that of Akbar the Great.[87] Abul Fazl remarks, "she did great things by dint of her foreseeing abilities. She had great contest with Baz Bahadur and Mians and was always victorious."[88] She was interested in the welfare of her people and won their respect by doing many public works.[89] She was 'a lady of loveliness and grace.'[90] The valiant Durgavati was India's Joan of Arc. She was not ready to submit her authority to emperor Akbar and did not even move when Ashaf Khan, the eminent general of Akbar, conquered Panna. He acquainted himself with the internal condition of her kingdom, her revenue and expenditure etc. At last in the year 1564 A.D. he was ordered by the emperor to invade Garha.[91] Durgawati was taken by surprise She called a council of her ministers and officers and decided to attack the enemy. She came out on a lofty elephant, named Sarman, with a few troops which she had, with great difficulty,collected in the emergency.[92] She fought bravely with the Imperial army. Two arrows struck her but she drew them out.[93] At last,wounded in the battle, she thought it better to die with honour than to live in disgrace. She asked one of her followers, named Adhar, who was riding in front of her elephant, to stab her.[94] The latter declined to do so,[95] and the Rani stabbed herself," I am overcome in battle, God forbid that I be also overcome in name and honour."[96] In this way her end was no less noble.

The other Hindu women who famed herself in politics was jeeja Bai (1594-1676). Jeeja Bai, the mother of Shivaji was in the base of the success of her son. She advised her son on political matters and guided him in crucial period.[97] Tarabai, the wife of Rajaram, has great administrative ability. She participated directly both in politics and war. It was her effort owing to which Aurangzeb could not establish his empire till seven years after the death of Rajaram.[98] Ahalyabai (1715-95) was also an able ~~x~~ politician and administrator. After the death of her husband she was the de facto ruler as a regent of Malorao.[99]

Mariam Uz Zamani popularly known as Jodha Bai, the wife of Akbar the great also influenced the court. During this period Hindu influence at court increased rapidly. At Fatehpur Sikri the Rajput Queen's Golden House and its little garden can still be seen. The lady was the mother of the Emperor Jahangir, whose first wife was also a Rajput princess, so that Shahjehan, the great builder was by descent more Rajput than Moslem.[100] Hindu heroes and heroines declare their love for each other as "like that of the sun and the day lotus, or the moon and the white lotus flowers."[101]

Many Hindu ladies entered into Mughal Harem, influenced king's personality and played important role in politics, administration and cultural activities. King's behaviour with them was liberal and tolerant. Therefore, their ideas, religious believes, practices and ways of living remained unchanged. It was the special credit of Akbar who paid special attention for the proper care of Hindu ladies. Daughter of Raja Bhar Mal and sister of Bhagwan Das whose name is not recorded in contemporary sources was married to Akbar in 1562 A.D.[102] Her entry into harem is important from political and administrative point of view. Akbar was much influenced by her. Jodh Bai joined the enjoyment of Harem but her relationship is still controversial.[103] Her another name Maryamuz-Zamani is not mentioned by any Muhammedan historian. Man Bai who received the title of Shah Begum was the daughter of Bhagwan Das and was married to Jahangir in 1585 A.D.[104] Daughter of Rai Singh, son of Rai Kalyan Mal of Bikaner was married to Jahangir in 1556 A.D. but her name is also not mentioned in contemporary sources like Tuzuk, but the ~~a~~ ceremony of marriage is mentioned.[105] Jagat Gosain, daughter of Udai Singh (Mota Raja) was married to Jahangir in 1586 A.D.[106] Her another name Mani Bai is also mentioned.[107] Karamsi, daughter of Keshava Das Rathor was married to Jahangir.[108] Another lady whose name is not given was the daughter of Jagat Singh, eldest son of Man Singh and was married to Jahangir.[109] Malik-i-Jahan, daughter of Kalyan of Jaisalmere was married to Jahangir.[110] Another lady whose name is also not given was the daughter of Ram Chand Bandilah and was married to Jahangir in 1609 A.D.[111] Man Bhawati Bai, sister of Raja Gaj Singh was married to Parwez in 1624 A.D.[112] Anup Kunwar, daughter of Rao Amar Singh was married to Sulaiman

Shikah.[113] Another lady whose name is not given was daughter of Rup Singh Rathor and was married to Bahadur Shah in 1693 A.D.[114] A lady whose name is not given but daughter of Ajit Singh was married to Farrukh Siyar in 1714 A.D.[115]

These are so many examples which explained the relation of Mughal kings with Hindu ladies especially with Rajput families who played a dominant role in northern Indian politics. These ladies advised kings on many points. Kings also respected and obeyed their wise suggestions on several occasions. Their entry into Mughal harem remained influencial and active in political, strategical, administrative, social and cultural spheres. The wives of king in harem were jealous of each other for gaining the favour and company of husband. Regarding this Travernier observes : "As custom the first born succeeded the throne the ladies of king's harem became very jealous of each other." They used all methods to bring about a miscarriage to other wives.[116]

Religious believes, practices, rituals of worship, ways of living, manners, dress and diet of Hindu ladies in Mughal harem remained unchanged because Mughal kings except Aurangzeb were liberal and tolerant in these matters. Akbar was too tolerant. He never touched their religious sentiments. His Hindu wives lived according to their choice. They worshipped Hindu deities. They celebrated Hindu festivals. Akbar also participated with them. He never interfered in their rituals and manners of domestic living. Hindu ladies used to wear Sari, Lahanga and choli in Harem. Akbar also followed Hindu dress to respect their sentiments. Jahangir was also liberal and tolerant with his Hindu wives in Harem life. Shahjehan was also liberal to some extent but he is known as anticipator of orthodox policy of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb was cruel and not tolerant. He never allowed the entry of Hindu ladies in Harem and stopped all Hindu religious practices in royal court.

FOOTNOTES

1. One of the couplets of Iraqi, an early poet of Iran, bears testimony of this.

2. Princess Djavidan Hanum's "Harem Life," Published by Noel Douglas, Lond., 1931, p. 11.

3. Ibid.

4. Deval Rani Khizr Khan by Amir Khusrau, p. 101.

5. Padmavat by Malik Muhammad Jayasi, Canto.1, doha 49,p.57.

6. Life in the Gupta Age, by Saletore, Bombay, 1943,p.182-83.

7. Ibid., pp. 182-83 and 185-86.

8. Hindustan Ke Maashirati Halat, by Yusuf Ali, Indian Press, Allahabad (1928), p. 25; Life in the Gupta Age, by Saletore, Bombay, 1943, p. 189.

9. Yusuf Ali, p. 25; Saletore, p. 189.

10. Saletore, p. 190.

11. Harsha Vardhana,by Chatterji, Hindustan Academy,Allahabad, p. 201.

12. Yusuf,Ali, p. 24.

13. Ibid., p. 61.

14. Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan, by K.M. Ashraf, Pub.in the 'Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 1935, p. 244.

15. Ibid., p. 245.

16. Ibid., p. 247.

17. Ibid., p. 148.

18. Ibid., p. 150.

19. Ibid., p. 150.

20. The Administration of the Sultans of Delhi, by Quraishi, Lahore, 1942, p. 163.

21. Ain-i-Akbari, Persian I, 40; English I, 45.

22. Storia by Manucci, II, p. 330 (Indian Text Series, Royal Asiatic Society, Translation by William Irwine).

23. Travels in Mughal Empire, by Bernier, Constable, Oxford 1916, pp. 267-68; Early Travels in India, by Finch, Foster, Oxford, 1921, pp. 162-65.

24. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, English I, 132, 241, 249, 320, 388, English II, 102 (English translation by Rogers Lond, 1909 and 1914); Mundy, II, p. 238 (The Travels of Peter Mundy Vol.II, Hakluyt Society Publication).

25. Storia by Manucci, II, p. 336.

26. Ibid., II, p. 352.

27. Akbar the Great Mogul by V.A.Smith, Oxford, 1917, p.439.

28. Shah Jahan Namah by Fazil Khan, 49a to 50a (MS No.235, The Asifyah Library, Hyderabad Deccan).

29. Shah Jahan Nam~~k~~ah, by Fadil Khan, 52a (MS.No.235, the Asifyah Library, Hyderabad).

30. Gulalbar was a grand wooden enclosure, an innovation of Akbar. Its doors were made very strong and could be opened and closed by means of key and lock (Ain., Persian I, p.50).

31. Ain., Persian I, p. 42.

32. Ain.,Persian I, p.40; English I, 45.

33. Manucci, II, p. 331.

34. Ain., Persian I, p. 40; English I, p. 45; Manucci,II, p. 330.

35. Ain., Persian I, p. 40.

36. Ain., Persian I, p. 40; Manucci, II, p.330, 31.

37. Ahkam-i-Alamgiri,Sarkar, Persian, p. 29;English, p. 69.

38. Daroghas, mushrifs and tahwildars are mentioned by Abul Fazl.

39. Manucci, II, p. 338.

40. Ibid., II, p. 35.

41. Ibid., II, p. 352.

42. Court Life of the Great Mughals, Allahabad University, Ms. p. 241-45.

43. Iqbal Namah-i-Jahangiri,Persian, p. 193.

44. Ain., Persian I, p. 40; English I, p. 45.

45. Roe,p. 215 (The embassy of ...... to the court of the Great Mughal, edited William Foster,Hakluyat Society Publication) Terry remarks that her fault lay in kissing the eunuch.

46. Ain., Persian I, p. 40; Manucci, II, p. 35.

47. Studies in Aurangzeb's Reign, by Sarkar,Calcutta,1933,p. 65.

48. Jourdain,p.163 (The Journal of John Jourdain,Hakluyt Society Publication No.XVI).

49. Ain., Persian I, p. 40; English I, p. 45.

50. Manucci, II, p. 351.

51. The Status of Women in Ancient India by Indra, p.146, 148, 239; Some Aspects of Social Life in Ancient India, by S. Mukerji, p. 132, some Aspects of the position by Gauri Rani Banerjee, p. 45 of Women in Ancient India.

52. S.Mukerji,p. 133; Indra, pp. 148-149.

53. S.Mukerji,p.132; Indra, p. 240.

54. Indra, p. 146; Gauri,p.46.

55. Watters, I, p. 330.

56. Ibid., II, p. 257.

57. S.Mukerjee,pp. 133-135,Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan by James Tod, I, p. 224.

58. Mewar in Pre-Mughal India, by Mathur, p. 265.

59. Ibid., pp. 183-184.

60. Society and Culture in Northern India in Twelfth Century, by Yadav, pp. 71-72.

61. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation, by A.S. Altekar, p. 187, Gauri, p. 45.

62. Tod, Vol. I, pp. 303-04.

63. Caenamaha,Vol. I, p. 153-154.

64. Raj Tarangini by Kalhan,VI,VV.332ff.

65. Yadav,p. 72.

66. Altekar education, p. 221; Mathur, pp. 264-265.

67. B.N.Sharma, pp. 32-33; Altekar,p.21.

68. Age of Nandas and Mauryas, by N.K.Shastri, p. 176.

69. Deval Rani Khizr Khan by Amir Khusrau (Khilji Kaleen Bharat), p. 172.

70. Futuh-us-Sȧlatin by Isami (Khiljikaleen Bharat),p.173.

71. Deval Rani Khizr Khan by Amir Khusrau (Khiljikaleen Bharat), p. 173.

72. Tarik-i-Firoz Shahi by Afif (Tughluq Kaleen Bharat) Vol.II), p. 54.

73. Makhzan-i-Afghana by Niamatullah,Tr. p. 24.

74. Niamatullah, p. XXIV; Tarikh-i-Shahi,Tr.Rizvi,Uttar Timur I, p. 315.

75. Niamatullah,p.38; Ferishta, I, p.179.

76. Tarikh-i-Shahi,Tr.Rizvi, Uttar Timur I, p. 315.

77. Women in Delhi Sultanate by L.C.Nand, p. 99.

78. Mewar and the Mughal Emperors by G.N.Sharma,pp.46-47.

79. Ibid., p. 50.

80. Ibid., pp. 51-52.

81. Ibid., pp. 55-57; Udaipur Ka Itihas by Ojha,Vol.I, pp. 398-99.

82. Mewar and the Mughal emperors,by G.N.Sharma, p. 58.

83. Akbar Nama (Bev.), Vol.II, p.324, Tabqat,Vol.II, p. 280.

84. A.N.(Bev.), Vol. II, p. 324.

85. A.N.(Bev.),Vol.II, p. 326; Cambridge History of India, Vol.IV, p. 87.

86. A.N.(Bev.),Vol. II, p. 324, Tabqat,Vol.V, p. 288.

87. Akbar the Great Mogul by V.A.Smith, pp. 69-70.

88. A.N.(Bev.),Vol.II, p. 327.

89. Akbar : The Great Mogul by V.Smith, p. 50.

90. Badauni,Vol.II, p.65, Tabqat,Vol.II, p. 280.

91. A.N.(Bev.),Vol.II, p. 327; Tabqat,Vol.II,p. 280.

92. A.N.(Bev.),Vol.II, p.329.

93. Ibid., p.330; Tabqat,Vol.II,p.281,Badauni,Vol.II,p.65.

94. Tabqat,Vol.II, p. 281.

95. A.N.(Bev.),Vol.II, p.330;Ferishta,Vol.II,p.218.

96. A.N.(Bev.),Vol.II, p.330; Maasir,Vol.I, p. 38.

97. Great Hindu Women in Maharashtra by Kamalabai Desh Pandey, p, 357.

98. Ibid., p.358

99. An advanced history of India by R.C.Majumdar and H.C. Raichoudhary and others, p. 679-80.

100. Gardens of the great Mughals, by C.M.U.Stuart, p.240.

101. Ibid., pp. 257 - 258.

102. Ain., Vol. I, p. 309.

103. Ibid., p. 309.

104. Tuzuk (R & B), Vol.I, pp. 15,55,56, A.N. (Bev.), Vol.III, pp. 677-78; Tabqat, Vol.II, p. 599; Badauni, Vol.II, p.352.

105. Ain., Vol.I, p. 310; A.N. (Bev.), Vol.III, pp.748-49; Tabqat (E & D), Vol.V, p. 454.

106. Tuzuk (R & B), Vol. I, p.19; Ain., Vol.I, p. 310.

107. History of Rajputana, by G.H. Ojha, Vol.Iv, p.358.

108. Tuzuk (R & B), Vol.I, pp. 18-19; Ain., Vol.I, p.310.

109. Tuzuk (R & B), Vol.I, pp.144-145; Ain., Vol.I, p. 310.

110. Beni Prasad, p. 26.

111. Tuzuk (R & B), Vol.I, p. 160; Beni Prasad, op.cit., p.26.

112. Tuzuk (R & B), Vol.II, p. 295.

113. History of Shahjehan of Dihli by B.P.Saksena, p. 319.

114. Irvine, Vol.I, pp. 141-42.

115. Maasir, Vol.I, p. 321.

116. Tavernier, Vol.I, p. 393.

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CHAPTER - III

POSITION OF HINDU WOMEN AS A WIFE AND AS A MOTHER IN THE FAMILY

In the Vedic and epic society the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. Though supreme authority was clearly vested in the husband, the wife's position was one of honourable subordination. It was well recognised that the wife was the ornament of the house.[1] The home management was under her direct charge and ordinarily her views were to prevail there.[2] The husband took her advice in all important matters.[3] The honoured position which the Hindu women enjoyed before the advent of Muslims in India gradually deteriorated during the Turkish rule. While the older tradition of high respect for them continued in a section of society,[4] there were some people who looked down upon them and denounced them as the root cause of the ruin of men.[5] Since Turko-Afghan rule child marriage started and illiterate brides came. Being very young, inexperienced and nervous they were always rebuked by their mothers-in-law. Therefore, a feeling of shame and inferiority complex developed among them. Now they were ill-treated and their status in the family declined.[6]

A ordinary Hindu girl had no choice in the selection of her husband. When married, the mother-in-law would exercise control over her and her commands must be carried out. If she failed to come up to her standard, the life of the newly wedded would become miserable. But when grown-up and away from the dominating influence of her mother-in-law, a middle class lady had large powers in the management of the household.[7] The position of a woman with regard to her husband was that of a dependent.[8] Some of the husbands treated their wives very harshly.[9] But with all this, the ladies belonging to high and respectable old families, especially Rajputanis, were reluctant to compromise when their self-respect was at stake. Raja Jai Singh of Amber once cut a joke with his wife, the princess of Haraoti, about the simplicity of her dress. Greatly annoyed, she spoke in words which clearly bring forth the true sex relations prevalent among high Rajput families. "Mutual respect is the guardian not only of happiness but of virtue," and if again she was insulted, he would find that "the daughter of Kotah could use a sword more effectively than the prince of Amber the scissors."[10] Rajputanis had the courage even to admonish their husbands, when they went astray from the path of duty. When Jaswant Singh, the king of Marwar, retreated after fighting the deadly battle of Dharmat with Aurangzeb, his wife, according to Ferishta, "disdained to receive him and shut the gates of the castle." She cried out that he could not be her husband, "the son-in-law of Rana cannot possess a soul so abject. I am deceived, my husband is certainly killed. It cannot be otherwise."[11] Whatever might have been the respective positions of wife and husband, it is a fact beyond dispute that most of the Hindus managed to lead a happy domestic life. The women adored her husband with passionate reverence and in return her husband rendered her all tenderness and protection. As a natural consequence, the true love and affection of the husband for his wife was unfailing. He would stick to monogamy and seldom fall a victim to adultery.[12] Tavernier rightly observes : Banias (Hindus) when married are seldom untrue to their wives.[13]

A girl in a Hindu house was taught to respect the members of the family, especially the elders, from her very childhood. She was supposed to worship her husband like God and obey his commands.[14] She was expected to be true to her husband and serve him even in the time of adversity.[15] She was to follow her pativrata dharma (complete loyalty and devotion to husband) and lead a very chaste life.[16] She always lived under the banner of male for her protection. She lived with her father in childhood, with her husband in the young age and with her son in the old age.[17]

Again, it is seen that as a wife she was the victim of child marriage and so could not understand the meaning and purpose of marriage. They used to be married before the age of nine. Sometimes they were married even before they had learnt to talk. Manucci writes that the normal age for marriage of girls was four or five in Brahmin families. Therefore they generally lived for a long time with their parents even after marriage and were sent to their husband's house after the ceremony of gauna.[18] But this evil practice is not generally found among the families of lower castes.

During the sultanate and Mughal period the position of women as a wife deteriorated. There were so many causes for this deterioration. The first among them was the Purdah. The word 'Purdah' is of Persian origin which literally means 'curtain'. In addition to the original sense it has also acquired a secondary meaning, viz. 'the seclusion of women,' which may, however, differ in degree according to the social status of a family. Purdah as we find it to-day was not known in ancient India. Yuan Chwang states that Harsa's sister attended his court without any veil. The strictness of purdah was generally relaxed on festive occasions. Everyone was allowed on the occasion of Harsha's birth to enter the inner apartments of the palace, without any consideration of his being a servant or a master, old or young, and so on.[19] Kalhana's account of the society in Kashmir shows that purdah did not prevail there. In the ninth century Abu Zaid remarked that "most of the princes of India when they hold a court allow their women to be seen by the men who attend it, whether they be relatives or foreigners. No veil conceals them from the eyes of visitors."[20] Apararka in his commentary on Yajnavalkya Smrti quoting from Samkha Smrti states that women could speak with merchants and doctors and could transact necessary business but were not allowed to speak with an unknown person.[21] The unmarried girls were perhaps not expected to observe any purda.[22] They freely mixed, sat, played and drank with men;[23] and from all the evidences we have, it appears that purda before the Muslim rule in India could have been only partial.

But even in a society where purda was not so strict women's social freedom was restricted in many ways. They could go out to visit their friends and relations but decorum required that they should not stay at their house for the night, or when their business was over. They were to observe a certain amount of reserve in the presence of strangers. As a daughter in her father's house she was brought up under the strict control and supervision of her father. He trained her as he wished and found a husband for her without consulting her wish and preference.[24] After her marriage she remained under the tutelage of her husband and if per chance she became a widow she had to be under the protection of her sons. Sukra does not regard women as entitled even to a moment's freedom.[25] His account of the daily routine of an ideal wife makes one conclude that her activities were strictly confined to her home and domestic affairs. Rising before others early in the morning, she was to clean the house,scrub domestic utensils for the sacred fire, prepare food and feed her husband and his relatives and show respect towards the elderly people of the family.[26]

On the other hand, there are the writers of the other class who say that purdah was observed by the upper and well-to-do classes of Hindu women.Referring to the Hindu women of Gujarat, Barbosa says, "...... These women are kept much at home and shut up. They seldom leave their houses and when go forth, they are wrapt up in long garments covering their heads, 'much as to women with us cover themselves, with the mantles."[26A] Poor women, especially in the rural areas, who had to work out-doors for their maintenance, could not have afforded to observe the rules of Purdah or to remain in seclusion with the same rigidity as their sisters belonging to the upper classes of society. The vast mass of peasant women did not wear any shroud or veil of a specific kind and they did not confine themselves to their houses.[27] In certain parts of the country, for example in Orissa, the strict observance of Purda had considerably restricted the free movement of the high class Hindu woman to such an extent that some of the contemporary literary works even refer to the prevalence of discontent among them.[28] It is not reasonable, however, to conclude that there was total absence of movement on the part of the Hindu women belonging to the upper classes of society. On the contrary, they went out of their houses, on special occasion, a very much like their Moslem sisters, in covered and well-guarded litters or palanquins (dolis or palkis).[29] A milder or less elaborate form of Purdah, commonly known as "ghoonghat"[30] seems to have been observed by the Hindu women of the well-to-do-classes, and it appears to have continued in Northern India and Bengal as late as the Middle of the 18th century.[31] The purdah, however, might have considerably hampered the progress of Hindu women during the period under review. It had become one of the potent factors responsible for the lack of female education, their subordination to men in the society and for their feeling of inferiority and mental deficiency.[32] Thus attempts were made by Bhakti Saints to free women from the bondage of purdah, which was a symbol of seclusion and isolation.[32A]

Man and woman are equally indispensable for each other. They are like the wheels of one carriage. They are absolute masters in their own spheres and the division of duties among them in accordance with their inherent aptitudes is quite natural and conducive to their mutual well-being.[33] Isami[34] advocated for complete seclusion of women and considered those women pure and moral who observed purdah. Amir Khusrau harped on the same string with the help of a number of metaphors and similies.[35]The renowned poet considered purdah as the best ornament of women which should be religiously observed when the girl comes of age (generally taken as seventeen years).[36] The place of women was home which provided the security and enabled them to lead a moral life. According to him a women should not peep here and there,the one who roamed about were not women but bitches.[37] Dupatta on a female has been compared to the crown of a Sultan.[38] Though Amir

Khusrau on one hand advocated strict purdah, on the other hand, he also admits the vices associated with it. The poet admits that the peculiar trait of peeping outside the house develops in the mind of secluded women.[39] Apart from the sense of insecurity occasioned by the inroads of the invaders, which continued for so many centuries, the differences of cultures and conceptions of morality were other factors which contributed to the rigidity of the Purdah in this country.[40]

Another factor which deteriorated the position of women as a wife was polygamy. It is worthmentioning that relation-ship between wife and husband in the richer section of Hindu society was perhaps bitter due to the curse of polygamy.Legally and morally a Hindu male generally permits one wife but those with adequate economic stability could afford to indulge in the extravagant luxury of maintaining a number of wives. De Laet has observed thus : "They have only one wife, though they are allowed two."[41] Thevenot observes : "when his wife dies or becomes mad, he may take another."[42] So polygamy was quite popular and prevalent among Rajput rulers and among Hindu nobles. It is recorded[43] that they also used to keep 'Harem.' This practice might have produced demoralising effects on the rulers and the nobility alike. Harems were full of women. Again there were womens' quarters or mahals. It is recorded[44] that each wife used to receive a monthly grant for domestic expenses. All women or co-wives lived together in the enclosure surrounded by high walls. There were tanks and gardens also inside the enclosure. Each wife was provided with a separate house and other amenities. It is interesting to see here that these Hindu nobles followed the same method like the Muslim rulers for maintaining supervision and watch over their co-wives. This is clearly documented.[45]

But unlike these rich people poor persons kept concubines in separate establishments and not in their houses. The offspring of such ladies gave rise to a lower caste people who were naturally of inferior social status. It is to be further observed here that there was lack of cordial relation and faithfullness on the part of less favourite wives. So things were not so happy and healthy in this respect.

Then we may justifiably conjecture that an average Hindu practised monogamy but those of the richer class indulged in polygamy. But on this account their family relation was badly affected. The famous Hindi poet Bihari has also here and there

there observed how relationships were bitter due to polygamy. The practice of polygamy and keeping concubines indeed embittered the family life of people as it is clearly recorded.[46] So it is evident that the atmosphere, especially at the top, was quite somewhat luxurious and was guided by consideration of sea. Women were the worst victims as it is clearly testified.[47] But it may be observed here that in many cases the relationship between co-wives and concubines was not so bad. In the light of above observations it can be said that persons who practised monogamy enjoyed better social status. Della Valle has also written thus : "Hindus take but one wife and never divorce till her death, except for the cause of adultery."[48] Mandelslo,[49] Hamilten[50] and Stavarinus[51] have also corroborated this fact. It is to be noted[52] here that in exceptional cases society also permitted relaxation, especially when women were proved to be barren.

Now we come to the conclusion that generally speaking the position of women as a wife was not quite satisfactory. She was sometimes treated as an ordinary maid. She had to serve and please every member of the family.Again she had to prove herself to be a devoted wife who could not take meals until her husband took meals as it is clearly recorded.[53] It is also sad to see that she was more or less helpless and was fully dependent[54] on her husband. She was given little respect and rest. She got rest only during pregnancy period. During this period people prayed for her health and safety as it is clearly stated.[55] But all is not dark and gloomy about her position. Traditionally she was considered to be 'ardhangini' or half of her counterparts. No rite or ceremony could be performed without her company.[56] So, as stated above, the women were not always in adverse position. This is quite natural in view of the traditional ideals of Hinduism.

Again it may be noted here that the women also realised her position and responsibilities as a Hindu wife and used to adore her husband with all sincerity and feeling. The husband also gave her all tenderness, love and protection. So in the majority of cases conjugal life was quite happy and cordial in Hindu families in comparison to Muslim families. Of course some well-to-do and highly respectable Rajput ladies were reluctant and uncompromising in their approach and this resulted in tension in the families. But by and large the atmosphere appeared to be quite cordial and congenial. Husband and wife trusted each other and had a sense of mutual respect.

Third evil that deteriorated the position of women was dowry. It has assumed serious and menacing form even during the present time. Dowry system was generally unknown in early societie and the same was the case with ancient Hindus. In rich and royal families some gifts were given to sons-in-law at the time of marriages. These presents, however, can hardly be called dowries, for they were voluntarily made after the marriage out of pure affection. It is only in medieval times and in Rajputana that we find the dowry system assuming alarming proportions. Really this system was more prevalent among the families of the richer class than among commoners. It is seen that the content of dowry differed according to the economic status of the parents. The foreign travellers took note of this system. It was usually received from the side of bride but the reverse practice could not be ruled out which was perhaps prevalent generally among the lower classes in the region of Bihar and adjoining areas. We may note here that there are records and references[57] which show that sometimes brides were purchased. The dowry system was also prevalent according to references in Bengal.[58] The wealth of dowry was called 'Stridhan' which legally was in her possession and was distributed among her sons after her death. In Bengal, Orissa and Assam this practice was popularly known as 'Jautuka'[59] while it was known as 'Dahej' or 'Daeej'[60] in Bihar and portions of modern Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. It may be noted here that restriction of marriage in caste may be said to be responsible for the prevalence of the dowry system. This also holds true today.

Fourth factor that deteriorated the position of women was female infanticide. The custom of female infanticide was not prevalent in ancient India. This custom crept into some sections of Hindu society during the medieval period.[61] Infanticide had sprung up as the result of two practices - strict caste limitation in choice of a wife and puberty consummation. Both of these turned the birth of daughters into a veritable calamity in all but the most well-to-do families. When Hindus adopted infant marriage during Moghul days, a flourishing system of marriage barter had sprung up, for where the fathers of daughters were over anxious to get them off their hands at the earliest possible moment, the fathers of sons saw their golden opportunity. The smaller the number of available bridegrooms, the more profitable it became to raise sons, and the more undesirable became girls.[62]

Prostitution also made the position of women lower to a great extent. This class of women was found since ancient period.

Prostitutes or courtesans were found in the Vedic period.[63] In the Dasakumaracarita, Dandin has given an elaborate account of the Vesyas.[64] Damodaragupta of Kashmir wrote a book entitled the Kuttanimatam which dealt exclusively with the various ways and means adopted by the ganikas to extract money from kings, nobles and other wealthy people.[65] In fact there is no important Kavya in which there is no reference to the ganikas.

No court of India was without them. Prostitutes surrounded Harsha when Bana first saw him.[66] Women who acted as his Chowri-bearers were probably prostitutes. When the king of Malwa was defeated by Rajyavardhana, the booty that fell into the hands of the conqueror included courtesans which means that they accompanied the king in his wars and battles.[67] This institution which was initially nurtured in the royal courts soon shifted its area of observations to the temples.[68] Here they earned for themselves the title of Devadasis.[69] These women were prostitutes who sold their bodies with the object of acquiring wealth. They preferred daughters to sons in order to keep up their profession. Profit earned by the temple dancing girls was often used for the support of tempåes.[70] It was also used by the ruler for state purposes.[71] Kalidasa refers to the dancing girls in the temple of Mahakala at Ujjaini.[72] In the Vasantagarh inscription of Varmalata dated A.D. 624, we hear of a courtesan Buta who was attached to the temple of Srimata.[73] Yuan Chwang speaks of girls dedicated to the Sun god at Multan.[74] In the temple of Somanatha in Saurastra, 500 danseuse were ever ready to please the deity by dancing before him.[75] Kalhana refers to the custom in Kashmir from the 8th century onwards.[76]

Public women known as Vesya or Ganika were looked down upon by the people. Ganikas were represented as full of many vices such as falseness, deceit, instability and impetuousness.[77] They were criticised as heartless women who lacked affection and yielded their bodies to people irrespective of their age, caste and virility.[78] These women of easy virtue lured men to abandon their houses, thus ruining the lives of young men, breaking up families and causing social disruption. To gain money was their sole object in life and their chief assistants in the task were old procuresses (i.e. the Kuttanis), generally women who in the early part of their lives had not unoften been ganikas themselves. After draining their paramours dry, they turned them out of doors.[79] In the tenth century the author of the Upamitibhavaprapancakatha criticised and condemned both the ganikas and their paramours.[80]

Alberuni shows that harlotry was encouraged in the country by the rulers for their own selfish ends. "The kings", he remarks, "make them an attraction for their cities, a bait of pleasure for their subjects; for no other but fanciful reasons. By the revenues which they derive from the business both as fines and taxes, they want to recover the expenses which their treasury has to spend on the army."[81] Other causes of its popularity can be easily summarised. The institution though condemned by moralists, finds a place in most societies. In India there may have been special reasons too. With the advent of early marriages, and in many cases also of the purda, Indian women in general did not attain the cultural level of their husbands. It was mostly the daughters of Kings and mahattaras who had any sort of education. The Vesya, learned in all the arts, got a seat in the janasarusada and honour from the talented and the rulers.[82] Dhanapala, the author of the Tilakamanjari includes them in the description of the Ayodhya city.[83] The state cleverly commissioned them as spies also.[84] These women who were in touch with the undesirable elements of the society —— murderers, rebels and outlaws —— were often able to ferret out secrets when they blurted out their plots and designs against the state. Champakali was one of the most accomplished prostitute whose services to the court as a spy stand unchallenged.[85] The courtesans were also employed for the entertainment of royal guests.[86] A separate office was created to deal with courtesans under a Superintendent who controlled fees, expenditure and inheritance.[87] The courtesans had to pay two days income per month to the state as tax.[88]

The institution of the public women was quite active during the Sultanate period.[88A] Speaking about the public women of Calicut Nicolo Conti writes thus, " ..... Public women are everywhere to be had, residing in particular houses of their own in all parts of the cities, who attract the men by sweet perfumes and ointments, by their blandishments, beauty and youth; for the Indians are much addicted to licentiousness; but unnatural crimes are unknown among them ......"[89] Chandbardai in his "Prithviraj Raso" refers to a prostitute named Chitrarekha patronised by Sultan Shahabuddin Ghori, whose brilliance and beauty was reminiscent of those of 'Rati' (the wife of cupid). She was well-versed and proficient in music and songs.[90] Vidyapati in his "Kirtilata," too, gives us a detailed description of the beautiful public women of Jaunpur. The courtesans there used to maintain their livelihood through immoral means and the people depended on them for the gratification of their physical pleasures.[91] These captivating women flocked to the market and induced young maidens to join their camps.[92] Prostitutes of Jaunpur had a happy and prosperous life under the patronage of Sultan Ibrahim Shah.[93] From this description of these public women of Jaunpur, it appears that prostitution was a legalised social evil.[94] Jayasi, in his "Padmavat," also refers to the description of the public women of Simhala who sat in the balconies to attract men by their various accomplishments.[95]

In the absence of any restrictions imposed by the state the number of these public women swelled and by the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji it reached to the extent of explosion.[96] To avoid such a state of confusion, the Sultan deemed it necessary to curb the nefarious activities of these public women.[97] The attitude of Sultan Alauddin Khalji towards public women was very queer. He regularised the institution by fixing up the prices of the prostitutes after categorising them into three grades. In compliance with his market regulations the Sultan classified public women into first, second and third categories the charges of their services were also fixed accordingly.[98] The prostitutes could not charge higher than the rate fixed by the State.[99] To improve the moral values of the society Sultan Alauddin Khalji also issued orders that all public women should enter into metrimonial alliance within a fixed period.[100] Further some sort of registration was officially done without which these women were forbidden to carry out trade in flesh.[101] No doubt these women were involved in vice but they did follow certain norms. It was the practice that once they accepted an amount in advance from an individual they entertained that person only at the appointed time.[102] Apart from getting royal patronage,[103] these captivating women were also encouraged by the nobles.

The number of the courtesans or the dancing and public women was also considerable during the period under review. Manucci speaks about this class of public women thus : 'Not satisfied with so many inventious for his inordinate desires, he (Shahjehan) also permitted great liberty to public women, of whom the greater number were dancers and singers. All of them paid taxes to the king. Among them is one caste called Cancherry (Kanchani) who were under obligation to attend twice a week at court for which they received pay, and to perform at a special place which the king had assigned to them. This class is more esteemed than others by reasons of their great beauty. .... All of them appear and dance in the royal presence.'[104] He, again, refers to the dancing women, in general, and says that they exhibited their performances in the principal open places in the city, from six in the evening till nine at night, lighted by many torches, and they earned a good deal of money.[105]

These courtesans and public women might have been largely responsible for the growing moral laxity in the society.[106] Several important Amirs had immoral relations with those prostitutes.[107] That is why, the Mughal emperors, particularly Akbar and Aurangzeb, wanted to check prostitution. It appears that Akbar[108] could not eradicate this evil completely, but made commendable efforts in this direction.

During the years following the death of this great Emperor till the early years of Aurangzeb's puritanic reign, this evil of prostitution seems to have aggravated and the courtesans as well as the singing dancing public women might have been reaping very good harvests.[109] It was alien to Aurangzeb's nature to tolerate it and, thus, he enforced certain strict regulations which were intended to promote the general tone of public morality and one of them, in particular, was clearly directed against prostitution. Manucci holds that the Emperor ordered that the public women and the dancing girls must marry or leave the realism.[110] This order, however, does not seem to have been effective because Manucci himself indicates that it was a dead letter.[111] Later on, this order seems to have been modified and the censors were asked to check prostitution.[112] The emperor's order to 'kill music and bury it'[113] also might have considerably affected their profession. Inspite of all these, however, Aurangzeb could not ban prostitution altogether, and Ovington who was in Surat as late as 1689 A.D. found many prostitutes and dancing girls there.[114] It is said by Manucci[115] that many prostitutes were Hindu widows, who were forced by circumstances to take up this profession. Poverty[116] also compelled some women to take up this job. It would not be out of place to point out that these factors hold good today also to some extent.

In economic matters, women have been assigned a place of subordination to the males. Hindu women perhaps enjoyed and got feeble and weak property rights in comparison to their Muslim sisters. A Muslim lady was entitled to a definite share in the inheritance with an absolute right to dispose of it. She retained this right even after marriage. But unfortunately on the other hand a Hindu lady had no such right.[117] She was deprived of the property of her husband's parents. She was entitled to maintenanc and residence expenses[118] besides Stridhana like ornaments, jewellery, costly apparel, etc.[119] Here too they were not free to dispose off the property without the consent of her husband.[120] Unfortunately this situation continued till recent times when Hindu law has been modified to make provisions for such rights. So Hindu women were in a disadvantageous position and are still present. This naturally handicapped her socially and economically. But modern researches have pointed the other side of the picture. Some of the Hindu ladies held Zamindaris, Milkiyat-rights and lands They had the liberty of inheriting, selling and disposing of their properties.[121] A lady named Sabhanu, who was the sister of one Mahen Singh sold her village Debidaspur in about 1681 A.D.[122] Another lady named Bhikan was the owner of two villages, Beidaura and Baidauri in the year 1672 A.D.[123]

Women were deprived of any concrete legal rights as well.[124] Even their evidence was not considered valid[125] except in cases involving their own sex.[126]

Similarly child marriages, caste marriage, lack of education, etc. were other potent causes for the deterioration of Hindu Womens' position as a wife.

A Hindu wife adored herself with dresses, cosmetics and ornaments. The fashion in the dress of women changed quite often and never remained the same for long.[127] The dress of the women varied with their social status. The royal women wore rich embroidered garment,[128] whereas the common women clad themselves in plain apparel. The dancing girls covered each part of their body[129] while the slaves wore attractive and bright clothes.[130] It appears that the use of turban was common amongst the women.[131] In the Vedic and epic age the prevalent mode of dress was Paridhanam and Vasahantaram.[132] Later on the dress of the women was distinctly divided into Uttariya, Kancuka and the candataka. The Uttariya formed the coverage of the upper portion and Kancuka was the bodice while the candataka was a sort of petticoat.[133] The use of Sari[134] like apparel too became common amongst them which was worn in different styles.[135] Alberuni[136] refers to a female garment, the Kurtaka which was a short shirt with sleeves extending from the shoulders to the middle of the body. On ceremonial occasions coloured garments were generally considered auspicious. The bridal dress was generally of red colour.[137] The garments presented on festive occasions were generally red.[138] Yasomati who burnt herself to death before her husband's death dressed herself in the Vestments of unwidowed ladies by putting on two reddish brown robes and a red Veil.[139] Artfulness of dress was permitted only in the attires of married women. Maidens generally dressed themselves in simple and tasteful clothes[140] and widows in white borderless clothes,[141] discarding all kinds of embellishments.

We have also a number of pen-portraits of women's dress. In the Harsacarita the descriptions of Savitri and Malati are of special interest and represent two types of female dress, the one of a divine lady who had taken temporarily to ascetic life and the other of household ladies belonging to the well-to-do families. The former is said to have worn a fine barkrobe made of the tree of paradise and as white as the mass of the foam of ambrosia. Between her breasts she had tied a knot, in Svastika form, with her upper garment made of lotus filaments. Over her shoulders she wore the white Yogapatta (the ascetic's scarf) which looked like Ganges that had been coiled round her body by the power of austerity.[142] The description of Malati introduces us the new names of candataka, chata-kancuka and aprapidana kancuka, the meanings of which have been explained already.[143] In Bana's description of the women of Srikantha we find further mention of a net-like thing serving as a veil.[144] The courtesans who bathed Sudraka are described as amsuka-Vinileaddha-Stana-parikara.[145]

The lahanga, which is so common in Rajputana and northern India at present, was altogether unknown for a long time. We meet it for the first time in some rare Mathura sculptures of the 2nd century A.D., where only maid servants or milkwomen are seen using it.[146] It became popular in higher society only in medieval times after the establishment of the Mohamedan rule. It is not referred to in literature, nor seen in paintings and sculptures of the Hindu period. In northern India it even became an indispensable constituent of the traditional bridal dress. In south India the Muslim influence was less felt and so the lahanga became common only among small girls. Grown-up women did not take to it.

The dress of Hindu women during the period under review changed slightly. They ordinarily wore a 'Sari' (i.e. a piece of cloth, wrapped round the middle part of the body and thrown over the head), and a small jacket or brassiere without a skirt round the chest, popularly called 'Angiya.[147] The 'Sari' which was almost in general use was of different colours, viz. white, yellow, blue, black etc. and in the cases of woman of well-to-do classes, it was normally made of thin and fine stuffs, decorated with numerous attractive prints or designs.[148] The ladies of the higher classes mostly wore such superfine 'Saris' of muslin and other thin cotton or silken fabrics as their skin was, sometimes, visible.[149] The women generally threw one half of their 'saris' on the shoulders or the head when speaking to a person of position.[150] Thevenot refers to the Hindu women thus, "From the waist downwards they wrap themselves up in a piece of cloth or stuff, that covers them to the Feet like a petticoat; and that cloth is cut in such a manner, that they make one end of it reach upto their head behind their back."[151] Angiya (a short jacket or blouse), as already referred to, was also known as 'Kanchuki,'[152] 'Kanchuli'[153] or 'choli',[154] and was of different colours and designs. It had generally two different patterns, i.e. one, covering only the breasts; and the other, long reaching down to the waist. The second type was in common use both among the rich and the poor and the first type (or brassiere type) was normally used by the grown up maidens or married ladies for tightening their breasts. The 'Kanchuki' used by the Rajput ladies of those days was open on the front.[155] Sometimes ladies of higher classes used very thin brassiere through which their skin was quite visible.[156] Orhini[157] was used by the women of the higher classes of Hindu society when they moved out of their houses. Hindu ladies used to wear also a lahanga or pyjama down from their waist as already said. The Hindu ladies of Kashmir wore dresses of dark maroon or blue colour and fastened a girdle of white cloth round their waist.[158] Babur has recorded that women dressed themselves in a cloth, called by him 'lung', half of which went round the waist and the remainder was thrown over the head.[159] The paintings of the Mogul period give a fairly accurate idea of the dress of Hindu women, who had come under the influence of the new fashions brought into vogue with the advent of the Muslim rule.

Next to dress was toilet which mostly occupied the attention of the ladies. Hindu women were very particular about the maintenance of their charm and beauty. The use of cosmetics and toilets was quite popular amongst them. Before taking bath unguents were rubbed on the body. After bath sweet-scented pastes were rubbed and scented clothes were put on.[159A] Hindu ladies parted their hair and twisted it behind their head. They often made rolls of hair on one side and did not bind it or made it in tresses. Long hair was considered a mark of beauty,[160] and poet Tulsidas rightly refers to it as the 'ornament of women.'[161] Girls allowed their hair to grow from the age of twelve onwards.[162] Women also used flowers to decorate their hair.[163] It appears that the grown-up women were very particular about the shape and beauty of their breasts and they took necessary precautions to maintain its attraction.[164] Further, we find that women were fond of dressing their hair in different styles and in the parting vermillion was placedd by the Hindu married ladies.[165] Bindi was used on the forehead.[166] collyrium was used for the eyes.[167] Some women used Missi (a kind of powder) for blackening their teeth.[168] They also used Mehdi (henna) to dye their hands and feet.[169] Often the coating of sandalwood paste was applied on the entire body.[170] Apart from providing charm, it had another purpose that is to kill body odour. Before performing Jauhar women generally applied coating of sandalwood paste to avoid the foul smell on their burning.[171] The widows who were about to perform Sati carried a mirror in their left hand.[172] Abul Fazl[173] gives us a detailed list of sixteen constituents of women's toilets. Keshavadas,[174] likewise, enumerates sixteen items of their toilets.

Hindu women exhibited a special weakness for a variety of ornaments during the period under review. To a married Hindu women her 'Sohag' signified the use of ornaments on almost all the limbs of her body from the top to the toe. The widows were not allowed to wear them. It was only when she unfortunately became a widow that she threw away all her ornaments and jewellery, broke off her bracelets (churis), and wiped out the vermilion mark from her head.[175] Battutah says that after the death of her husband a widow wore ornaments for few days prior to the performance of Sati.[176] It was after taking bath in a pond near the pyre that the widows gave all their ornaments in alms, to the Brahmins and then performed Sati.[177] There was wonderful variety of women's ornaments which were used for the different limbs of the body, e.g. head, neck, nose, ears, arms, fingers, waist, thigh, feet etc. Abul Fazl mentions thirty-seven different types of ornaments, either plain or studded with jewels, for adorning the various feminine limbs.[178]

Hindu women, however, were accustomed to the use of ornaments from their very childhood. At a very early age, their ears were bored.[179] The names of the ornaments used by the common women among the Hindus were the same as worn by the ladies of well-to-do and aristocratic class. The main difference between their ornaments was that of material and sometimes of pattern or name.[180]

The common women instead of gold, silver and precious jewels used copper, tin, glass and ivory.[181] Ornaments made of gold were not worn by the Hindu women below their waist.[182]

Then coming to the position of women as widows we see that the Hindu husband could remarry in certain exceptional circumstances; for example when the wife proved to be barren or when she died. But unfortunately a Hindu women had no such option. Divorce was not permissible and prevalent practice even if the husband was undesirable morally and socially. It is clearly stated[183] that women could not get freedom from her husband even if she was manhandled by him. She did not enjoy the option to remarry even after the death of her husband. If she so desired, she was considered to be undesirable and ignorable.[184]

We may note further that widow remarriage except for the lower caste people had disappeared almost completely in Hindu society during the period under review.[185] Hindu ladies, according to Ovington, disliked and abhorred the very idea of remarrying and preferred to maintain their fidelity even after the death of their husbands.[186] They preferred death rather than indulge in sexual life after death of their husband according to reliable sources.[187] Perhaps they did not like to live after the death of their husband. The very few who desired to remarry disregarding the custom were turned out of their caste and community and finding it impossible to find a husband in their own community had "recourse to christians and Muhammadans."[188]

Again we may point out here that the death of the husband was really the greatest calamity for the Hindu women even during the period under review. Widowhood was considered to be the result of some sinful action of the past life as it is recorded.[189] It is further observed that the life of the widow was very much pitiable and it was full of troubles, frustrations and all such unpleasant things. They were deprived of common social and other priviledges and rights which were enjoyed by other women. They were required to lead a life of austerity and penance. She was looked down upon in the family. It is to be noted here that women with her husband alive (Suhagin) is considered to be quite fortunate and this was the practice even during the Mughal period. Widowhood was considered to be the greatest punishment for women. As stated earlier she was subject to various troubles and handicaps. She had to renounce all the mundane pleasures. She was not entitled and eligible to put on bangles and wear colourful dresses. She was also not allowed to put on vermillion mark.[190] This was washed and wiped out. She had to give up all kinds of decoration and ornamentation. The famous poet Tulsidas[191] has also directly or indirectly referred to this aspect. Such women could put on only white clothes. She had to live as a sober and simple lady. Poet Keshavdas has also depicted the sad plight of Hindu widows of this period. It is said that she was required to live an austere life and was not allowed to eat either hot things or to drink cold water. On the other hand some historians mention that no restriction was placed upon their diet. It appears that they ate vegetables[192] and enjoyed eating meat and fish.[193] She could not participate in games and recreation. She was required only to devote herself to religious and such other matters. She was made to fast on certain days. Her hair were also cut and she had to live under strict restrictions. She could not move outside the doors of the house. Abul Fazl[194] has also referred to the sad plight of Hindu widows and has observed that Sati was preferable to widowhood. The custom of the tonsure (hair cutting) of widows seems to have been borrowed from Buddhism and Jainism. It was hoped that this would help in creating an ascetic atmosphere around her, so necessary for her resolution to lead a celibate life. The procedure was calculated to destroy the beauty of face. It was thought that it would incidentally afford the widow a greater protection against the unwanted attentions of undesirable characters.[195] The custom of niyoga (birth of a son from the husband's brother), though permitted by Smrtis, seems to have been out of vogue during the period under review. Alberuni plainly states that niyoga had gone out of use in his days.[196]

Again we may note here that some Hindu widows preferred to give up their religion and it is said that they became Muslims. This shows how Hindu widows were frustrated and fed up with their lives. It is really sad that her appearance was considered to be quite inauspicious. She was really avoided on auspicious occasions. The family and the society did not take proper care of her. This is clearly testified by many sources.[197] They were deprived of common and simple things of life. These unfortunate creatures were subject to all kinds of humiliations and they had to live with their parents, who treated them no better than ordinary maids, doing all the menial jobs in the house.[198]

But the state was perhaps particular regarding the welfare of the widows.[199] Justice was imparted to them without any discrimination.[200] The Qazi would not hesitate to summon the Sultan to the court when the question of justice to a widow was concerned.[201] Contemporary sources informs us that some serious attempt was made to ameliorate the object condition of a widow in Mughal period. The writer of the Ekalinga prasasti[202] informs us that Maharana Raimal made it a rule that the property of a widow should not be confiscated. Similarly the Maharaja of Jaipur instructed a parganah officer of Hindaon in 1711 A.D. that an allowance of Rs. 8 per month be paid to the widow of Lal Behari from the income of the Kotwali of the Tehsil.[203] The Kotah and Jodhpur records furnish a list of widows who were receiving regular aids from the state in the 18th century.[204] Despite alll these it is worthmentioning here that she had disability regarding proprietory one. She was not regarded as an heir to her husband's property. The property of her deceased husband was looked after by the next senior member of the family, uncle or son. Her claim in practice was only to her maintenance.[205]

As a mother woman commanded high respect in the Hindu family. No one would proceed on a journey without seeking the blessings of his mother by touching her feet.[206] Manu[207] and other Hindu law givers have also clearly pointed out that mother has to be respected more than the father. Really speaking the relationship between mother and son is supposed to be more cordial. It is sometimes vitiated after son's marriage when some misunderstanding between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law crops up. Here we may see that women as wives got less priviledge and prestige than women as mothers. We may further note here that Rajputs showed greater respect and regard for their mothers. In fact Rajput mothers occupied honourable and exalted position in society. She actively participated in her son's glories and victories.[208] There are many instances when brave sons like Rana Sangram Singh II of Mewar and such others used to pay respect to their mothers before taking their meals. It is said[209] that they always tried to comply their mother's wishes or orders. So it is seen that they attached considerable importance to their mother's desire. There are records[210] which testify to this fact clearly and explicitly.

A woman as a mother occupied also a pious place in early medieval society.[211] The first lesson of a child starts in his mother's lap.[212] A mother plays a dominant role in influencing the character of her children. She is the foremost teacher. If the mother is good, gentle and god fearing the children will naturally inherit these virtues.[213] The mother always thinks for the well-being of her son. The birth of Rai Lakhmaniya is is an interesting example. Rai Lakhmaniya's mother was in a state of advance pregnancy.[214] When she felt labour pains she sought the advice of Brahmins and astrologers whether the time was auspicious for the child-birth. The astrologers remarked that "if the child was born two hours later, he would bring fame to the family and would rule for eighty years."[215] She at once asked her attendants to hang her upside down and remained in that position till the favourable time came.[216] She then gave birth to a male child but died immediately because of her suffering. This was all done for the welfare of her child.[217]

A careful study of the preceeding pages clearly reveals that the position of women as a wife, as a widow and as a mother, during the period under review, was not very much different from what it is to-day, inspite of the changes under the pressure of modern social forces. The women belonging to the well-to-do classes and the richer sections undoubtedly compared favourably with their modern counterparts in their social activities, and even in their high cultural and literary accomplishments. On the other hand, the condition of the vast mass of women, especially those living in the scattered rural areas can

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hardly be called satisfactory, as they were mostly illiterate and were buried behind the evils of ignorance and superstitions.

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Footnotes

1. R.V. 1, 66,3.
2. A.V. XIV. 1, 43.
3. Sachau, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 181.
4. The Laws of Manu, Tr. by Buhler, p. 85.
5. Sur Sagar, Part II, p. 1187; Ram Charitmanas, p. 778.
6. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization by A.S.Altekar,p.92.
7. Ibid., p. 396.
8. Stavorinus, I., pp. 440-41.
9. A.N., II, p. 217.
10. Tod, II, pp. 728-30.
11. Bernier, p.41.
12. Tavernier, III, p. 181.
13. Ibid.
14. Ram Chandrika by Keshav, Part I, p. 134; Ram Charit Manas by Tulsi Das, pp. 631-32.
15. Ram Chandrika by Keshav, Part I, p. 135.
16. Dadu Dayal Ki Bani by Dadu Dayal, p. 95.
17. Ashraf, op.cit.
18. Ashraf mentions specific period of Rukshadi - two years and six months, Five Years or Seven years.

19. HC, IV, p. 129.

20. ED, I, p. 11.

21. Samkha S. in Aparарka on Yaj, I. 83.

22. The King in the play Priyadarsika remarks that
निर्दोष दर्शनि कन्यका (पृ.30)

23. Ratnavali by Kalidas, Act I, p. 14.

24. In the play MM, Kamandaki remarks that "प्रभवति प्रायः कुमारिणां
जनयिता दैवं च" (Act II, p. 69).

25. SNS, III. 19.

26. SNS, IV, VV. 345-56.

27. The Book of Duarte Barbosa, Vol.I, Hakluyt Society, London, 1918, p. 114.

27. Kavikankan Chandi by Mukundaram (C.U. 1952, pt., L, pp.182-84).

28. "Garuda Geeta" by Achutananda, p.11.

29. Storia, II, pp. 175 & 188.

30. 'Rasikpriya' by Keshavadas (Seventh Prakash, Published by Matri Bhasha Mandir, Daraganj, Prayag, First edition, 1954, Savaiya 31, p. 100).

31. Bharat Chandra Granthavali (the story of Vidya-Sundar), pt. 11, published by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, p.15.

32. North Indian Social Life during Mughal Period by P.N.Ojha, p. 122-23; Some aspects of North Indian Social Life by K.P.Sahu, p. 188.

32A. Women in Delhi Sultanate, by L.C.Nand,p.

83. Some cultural aspects of Muslim rule in India,by S.M.Jaffar, p. 195-96.

34. Isami, Text , p.130.

35. Hasht Bahisht, p. 27; Matlaul Anwar, pp. 225-226.

36. Matlaul Anwar, p. 224.

37. Hasht Bahisht, p. 29.

38. Matlaul Anwar, p. 226.

39. Wastul Hayat, p. 9.

40. Some cultural aspects of Muslim rule in India, by S.M.Jaffar, p. 202.

41. The Empire of the Great Mogul, p. 86.

42. Indian Travels, p. 117.

43. Storia, III, p. 71.

44. The Empire of the Great Mogul, p. 86.

45. Storia, II, p. 352.

46. Bihari Ratnakar, by Jagannath Das, p. 80.

47. Some Aspects of North Indian Social Life by P.N.Ojha,p.153.

48. Della Valle (ed. Edward Grey) I, pp. 82-83.

49. Mandelslo, p. 52.

50. Hamilton, I, p. 157.

51. Stavorinus, I, p. 440.

52. Mandelslo, p. 52.

53. Storia, III, p. 155.

54. Stavorinus Writes - "Women live in the Stricktest Subjection to their husbands," Vol. I, p. 440.

55. Bartolomeo, pp. 253-54.

56. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.

57. Manucci, Vol. III, p. 55.

58. Aspects of Bengali Society by T.C.Das Gupta,

59. Prithviraj Raso by Chandbardai, Pt. II, 1st edn., V.S.2012, p.400.

60. Ibid., Pt. II, 1st edn., V.S.2012, Samay 31 (Indravati Vibhaha), doha 38, p. 912.

61. The position of women in Hindu Civilization by A.S.Altekar, pp. 7-8.

62. Purdah : The Status of Indian Women by S.Das, p. 79.

63. HDS, II, Part I, p. 637.

64. DKC, II, pp. 66-68.

65. Published in KMS, Vol. III.

66. HC, II, p. 75; Kadambari, p. 172.

67. HC, VII, p. 227.

68. B.N.Sharma, pp. 27-28, B.P.Mazumdar, pp. 371-372.

69. Gauri, pp. 135-138.

70. B.P. Mazumdar, p. 235. D.D.Kosambi, p. 196.

71. Sachau, II, p. 157.

72. Meghaduta, I. 36.

73. EI, Vol. IX, p. 191.

74. Watter, Vol. II, p. 254.

75. Sachau, Vol. I, p. 116.

76. RT, IV, V.36.

77. Kuttamimatam, 473, 487, Samayamatrka, 468.

78. Kuttanimatam, 92, 310.

79. Ibid., 318.

80. Upamitibhavaprapancakatha, pp. 622-628.

81. Sachau, II, p. 157.

82. Kamasutra by Vatsyayana, I.3.

83. TM, p. 8.

84. Basham, pp. 185-186; G.N.Sharma, p. 123;Gauri,pp.172-173.

85. G.N.Sharma, p. 123.

86. B.N.Sharma, p. 29; Gauri,p. 186.

87. Gauri, p. 186.

88. Basham, p. 185; Altekar Govt., p. 201.

88.A. Shihapal Sinal Umari, Tr.I.H.Siddiqui & Qazi Mohd.Ahmad,p.67.

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92. Ibid., 2nd pallava, Chhanda 24, doha 138, p. 85.

93. "Kirtilata", 1st edn., 1962, 2nd Pallava, Chhanda 25, doha 153, p. 91.

94. Refer to J.U.P. Hist. Soc. Vol. IV (New Series), pts.I-II, 1956, an art. entitled Jaunpur in Vidyapati's "Kirtilata", pp. 110-111.

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97. Ferishta Tr. Rizvi, Khalji Kaleen, p. 228; Ashraf, p.265.

98. Ferishta Tr.Rizvi, Khaljikaleen, p.229; Ashraf, p.265.

99. Ferishta, Tr. Rizvi, Khaljikaleen, p.229.

100. Khaizain-ul- , Tr. Habib, p. 11.

101. Shihabal Dinal Umari, Tr. I.H.Siddiqui and Qazi Mohd. Ahmad, p. 67.

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103. Siyar-ul-Arifin, M.S.S., p. 140.

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106. Badaoni II (Lowe), p. 312.

107. Ibid., p. 312.

108. Ibid.

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110. Storia, II, p. 9.

111. Ibid., p. 186.

112. Mirat-I-Ahmadi I.250.

113. Storia, II, p. 8.

114. Ovington,p.153

115. Storia, III, p. 60.

116. Ibid., p. 60.

117. Altekar, p. 259.

118. The Position of Women, by Menon, p.25.

119. Altekar, p. 259.

120. Ibid., p. 228.

121. Agrarian System in Mughal India, by Dr. Irfan Habib,p.155.

122. U.P.Records Office,Allahabad. Accession Register of the U.P. Records, Inquiry Committee Records No.1215 and 1216 as quoted in Agrarian System in Mughal India by Dr.Irfan Habib,p.155.

123. Ibid., p. 155.

124. ~~XXX~~ Indra, p. 161.

125. S.Mukerji,p. 144, Indra, p. 156.

126. Hopkins, p. 182; Indra, p. 157.

127. S.Mukerji,p.241, pp. 250-251; Basham, p.213; Altekar,p.295.

128. Motichand, p. 151.

129. Ibid., p. 71.

130. Ibid., p. 220.

131. Ibid., p. 71,92.

132. Altekar, pp. 279-281.

1333. B.N.Sharma,p.281, Tod, I, p. 517.

134. Motichand,p.14,37,122; G.N.Sharma, p. 51.

135. Motichand, p. 81, 122.

136. Sachau, I, p. 180.

137. HC, IV, p. 146-7.

138. Nagananda, Act IV, p. 138.

139. HC, V, p. 164.

140. VSB, Act I, p. 56.

141. HC, V, p. 171.

142. Ibid., I, p. 10.

143. Ibid., p. 32.

144. HC, III, p. 98.

145. Kadambari, p. 31.

146. Bharatiya Veshabhusha, by Motichandra, p. 125.

147. Ain, III (J & S), p. 342.

148. For 'Saris' of different colours, and of cotton and silken stuff-fine and coarse used by the Oriya Women, a reference may be made to "Rasa-Kallol" edited by Prof.A.B.Mahanty, Rovenshow College,Cuttack,p.8).

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150. Ibid., III, p. 40.

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160. Mandelslo, p. 50.

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162. Manucci, Vol. III, p.40.

163. Stavornius,Vol.I, p. 415; Fryer, Vol.II, p. 117.

164. Altekar,p. 300; B.N.Sharma, pp. 268-270.

165. Sursagar, Part I, p.205.

166. Ibid., p. 265.

167. Ibid., p. 265.

168. Dewan of Zebunnisa by Magan Lal, p. 14.

169. Manucci, Vol.II, p. 341.

170. Nuh,Sipihr VII, p. 560.

171. Women in Delhi Sultanate by L.C.Nand, p. 222.

172. Ibn Battutah,Tr. Mahdi, p. 222.

173. Ain (J & S), pp. 342-43.

174. Kavi-Priya (Matri Bhasha Mandir,Daraganj,Prayag,1st ed., 1952, p. 40); Savaiya, 7, p. 41.

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176. Ibn Battutah, Tr. Mahdi, p.22.

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178. Ain,III (J & S), pp. 343-345.

179. Voyages D'Ibn Battuta,Vol.III, Paris, p. 71.

180. Aspects of Bengali Society by T.C.Das Gupta,pp.51-56;Bengal in the sixteenth century, pp. 184.

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183. Altekar, p. 102.

184. Della Valle, I, pp. 82-83.

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186. Ovington, pp. 323-24.

187. Ibid.

188. Thevenot, III, Chap. XLIX, p. 84.

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190. Ashraf, Op.cit.,

191. Ram Charitmanas,Doha 98.

192. Society and Culture by Rashid, p. 48.

193. Chaitanya and his Age by Sen, p. 11.

194. Ain, III (J & S), p. 356.

195. The Position of women in Hindu Civilization, by A.S. Altekar,pp. 159-61.

196. Sachau, I, p. 107.

197. Mandelslo, p. 86, Bernier, p. 314.

198. Storia, III, p. 60.

199. Women in Delhi Sultanate by Lokesh Chandra Nand,pp.170-71.

200. Ibid., pp. 171-72.

201. Ibid., p. 172.

202. Ekalinga-prasasti, V.83.

203. A letter dated 5th of the dark-half of Magha, V.S.1768 (1711 A.D.) from the Maharaja to an Officer of Parganah Hindoon, P.C.No.478.

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212. Akhbar-ul-Akhyar, p.283.

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CHAPTER - IV

RITUALS

(BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND FUNERAL RITES)

BIRTH

A Hindu has to pass through certain ceremonials from birth to death and these are termed samskaras. As a matter of fact, the samskaras begin from the time of one's conception in his or her mother's womb and last till after death. In the Jatkarmasamskara or the birth ceremony, the child was fed with a spoonful of a mixture of honey and ghee. In honour of the birth of the child great rejoicings were observed which included songs and distribution of coconuts and other articles. Well-to-do persons offered cows to the Brahmans on such occasions.[1]

Hinduism has a large number of socio-religious rites. Of these the most important are birth, marriage and funeral rites. The husband gave a handsome present to the person bringing the good news of conception.[2] The room which the wife occupied was white-washed and rites were performed to keep out spirits. Auspicious lamps were burnt, jars full of water were placed on the side-doors and auspicious paintings were drawn on the walls of the room. Circles made with ashes round the bed were supposed to drive out all evil spirits from there. A white silver$_x$ jar was placed near the expecting woman's bed, with a view to assuring her sound sleep.[3] A talisman formed of mystical diagrams, perhaps traced on birch leaves, and the magic rings of Katyayani-sakti or some other goddess protected the bed. White mustard was scattered around it, green nimba leaves were tucked and asvattha leaves tied with hair were hung here and there. As for the wife herself she was the centre of all attention. Old women versed in traditional rites waved round her head cylindrical bamboo boxes surrounded with red cloth in which lamps were kept burning and vessels containing such things as white mustard, unbroken pieces of curds, white boiled rice and unwounded fish mixed with fresh flesh. Servants kept the pregnant woman in a joyful frame of mind; and the husband tried to satisfy all her longings.[4]

On the sixth day a vigil was kept in which all relatives and friends participated perhaps fearing that the goddess Sastika or Skandamata would otherwise trouble the child. On the tenth day the child received a name.[5] Till then the mother was considered impure and was not allowed to touch any household utensils. According to Alberuni the days of impurity incidental to the birth of a child were eight for the Brahmanas, twelve for the Kshatriyas fifteen for the Vaisyas, and thirty for the Sudras. For the low-caste people no term was fixed as they were not reckoned among any caste.[6] However, on the basis of Brahmana Purana, Laksmidhara has prescribed ten days for Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya woman and thirteen days for Sudra woman. On the 12th day Barhi was celebrated. On this occasion alms were given to the mendicants.[7]

In the Hindu family the birth of a child was an occasion of rejoicing. If it was a male child the rejoicing was more manifest because the main function of a woman according to Hindu Sastrakaras was to bring forth a male child. Alberuni informs that when a child was born people showed particular attention to the man, not to the woman.[8] After the birth of the child Jatakarman[9] ceremony was performed in which the father of the child took out a golden ring, dipped it in butter and honey and put it in the mouth of the infant.[10] According to Asvalayana Grihyasutra the father should, first of all, touch the infant and feed him with honey and butter mixed with gold.[11] After this, ceremony of cutting of naval-cord was held.[12] On the sixth night chhathi was celebrated with great festivity. On this occasion the womenfolk sang blessing songs and danced. Next day the Pandit recorded and interpreted the hour of birth, planetary position and stellar conjunction (Lagan) and with the help of that he prepared the horoscope of the child.[14]

After the prescribed period of childbed (sutak) the child received the name which was known as Namkaran ceremony.[15] There was no fixed period for it. According to Aprarka, it should be after ten days or within one month to the maximum.[16] But we find Padmavati receiving name on the next day of chhathi.[17] According to Alberuni the perforation of ear took place in the seventh or eighth month.[18] Bandhayana also agrees to this view.[19]

The birth of a daughter was considered inauspicious. The very silence with which a female child was received was indicative of disappointment.[20] She was not as welcome as a boy. Even in the royal family, the difference was clear and well-marked. Only women rejoiced and feasted on the birth of a daughter, while the whole court took part in the celebrations if a prince was born.[21] A wife who unfortunately happened to give birth to girls in succession was despised and even sometime divorced.[22] The deplorable custom of infanticide was luckily confined only to a very minor section of the less cultured Rajput families.[23] The scarcity of suitable matches due to the prohibition of inter-marriage between families of the same clan and continuous wars and feuds with the remote tribes, together with the sentiment that an unworthy matches lowers the prestige of a bride's father, led them to resort to this practice.[24] Child birth was taken by the common Indian women very easily. After the birth of child the very next day mothers would be found moving about and doing domestic works, and even in fields, in lower class Hindu families.[25]

Then comes the most important function of Hindu social life that is marriage. This facilitates the Hindu individual to enter into the life of householder. Swami Sivananda has made interesting observations which smack of his religious approach to the problem :

> Vivaha is marriage or entry into the second Ashrama. The life of the householder beings. Now he takes up his duty as man and pays his debts by sacrifice, by study and by procreating children. The bride-groom tells the bride : "I take your hand for good fortune." They walk round, the sacred fire hand-in-hand. The bride sacrifices ..... in the fire and prays "May my husband live long. May my relations increase."[26]

So it is clear that marriage according to the Hindu scheme is supposed to be a sacred bond. Marriage occupies a very important place in the life of women because upon its success depends the happiness of their whole life. Emphasising the importance of marriage in a society, Alberuni says that no nation can exist without a regular married life, for it presents the uproar of passions abhored by the cultivated mind, and it removes all those causes which excite the animal to a fury always leading to harm. Considering the life of the animals by pairs, how the one member of the pair helps the other, and how the lust of other animals of the same species is kept aloof from them, you cannot help declaring matrimony to be a necessary institution; whilst disorderly cohabitation or harlotry on the part of man is a shameful proceeding, that does not even attain to the standing of the development of animals, which in every other respect stand far below him.[27] The Hindu sastrakaras have also given due importance to the institution of marriage. But to them it is not meant to stem the tide of passion. It is the civilized step to enter into the Grihasthasrama from Brahmacharyasrama. In the Hindu society marriage is generally considered as obligatory for every person because the birth of a son is said to enable one to obtain moksa. The Manu-smrti states that to be mothers were women created and to be fathers men; therefore the Vedas ordain that dharma must be practised by man together with his wife.[28] Manu calls it a Sarira Samskara through which every man and woman must pass at the proper age.[29] According to Manu, a man is not perfect within himself. He only is a perfect man, who consists of his wife, himself and his offspring.[30] The Hindu Sastrakaras are especially particular about the marriage of a woman because a wife is the very source (mulam) of the Purusharthas, not only of dharma, artha and kama, but even of moksa. Those who have wives can fulfil their due obligations in this world (Kriyavantah); those that have wives, truly lead a family life; those that have wives can be happy; and those that have wives can lead a full life (Srivanvita).[31]

Thus women have, according to Hindu Sastrakaras, a dominant role in the life of men. Unfortunately the Muslim writers of the period have thrown little light on the institution of marriage. But very often something incidently mentioned about the women of this period gives us some informations regarding the Hindu marriage system. We also get valuable information from Alberuni's Kitab-ul-Hind, and contemporary digests like Parasara-Madhaviya of

Madhavacharya, Madana-Parijata of Madan Pala, Grihastharatnakara of Chandesvara, and also from contemporary vernacular works such as Jayasi's Padmavat, Manjhan's Madhumalati and Qutban's Mrigavati, etc.

Before going to any topic concerning marriage I would like to describe first about the marriage age. During the Vedic age girls were generally married at the age of 15 or 16. From about 200 A.D., Pre-Puberty marriages became the order of the day.[33] Still in the aristocratic families the marriage of girls took place on their reaching the age of fifteen or so. Rajyasri, Kadambari and Mahasveta were fully grown up before they were married. In the Kshatriya royal families the prevalence of Svayamvara, if the testimony of the Dvasrayamahakavya of Hemachandra and the Prthvirajavijaya of Jayanaka be regarded as valid for the period of this survey, would show that the girls were mature enough to choose their partners in life. The former mentions a Svayamvara in which Mahendra of Nadol (C. A.D. 1000) held the ceremony for his sisters Durlabhadevi and Lakshmi. The Prithvirajavijaya refers to Kalavati, the girl given in marriage to the ruler of Kanyakubja, most probably Bhoja (C. A.D. 836-888). She seems to have been of marriageable age. Twelve kings probably contested for her hand.[34] But girls in the orthodox families of Brahmanas, were married at a very early age. The pre-puberty marriage was considered as an ideal one by Samvarta, Parasara, Vyasa, Samkha and many other Smrti writers.[35] According to Medhatithi the right time for a girl to be given in marriage was her eighth year.[36] The twelfth year was the latest limit laid down for a girl to remain as a maiden If she remained unmarried even beyond that, her parents and elder brothers (upon whom lay the sole responsibility of her marriage) were assigned to hell.[37] A Brahmana, found guilty of marrying a girl after she had attained puberty in her father's house, was not considered fit for conversation and dining in the company of the other members of his caste.[38] Alberuni who saw these things personally remarks that "the Hindus marry at a very young age" and that "a Hindu is not allowed to marry a woman above twelve years of age."[39] Bhavabhuti confirms the popularity of early marriages in his days by representing Sita as a child, i.e. a sisu, at the time of her marriage,[40] even though the Ramayana contains no such statement.

Child-marriage was prevalent among the Hindus even during the sultanate period. When Padmavati became twelve years of age, her father Gandharvasena thought her fit for marriage.[41] From Madhumalati we find that when a father failed to marry his daughter before nine, she became a matter of criticism for her father in society. No one had good words for her in father's house.[42] The parents of the girls were under moral obligations to give away their daughters before puberty. Nanak was married at the age of 14.[43] From Amir Khusrau we know that Deval Rani was married to Prince Khizr Khan at the age of 8.[44] In a contemporary Rajasthani work entitled, Dhola-Marura Duha we find a reference to the marriage of Marwani when she was only one and half years of age and her bridegroom of only three years.[45]

Again the Smriti rules pertaining to marriage led to unequal marriage. Sometimes a child was married to a young girl much older than the former. We find a married girl talking to her handmaid thus, "O'Sakhi' : my life is good for nothing, as I am completely mature and young, while my husband is now an ignorant infant."[46]

The Muslim writers of the period do not give any information regarding those girls who failed from various causes to get themselves married before puberty. However, the digests of the period like Grihastharatnakara state that the girls should wait for three years if their fathers or other guardians, inspite of their efforts, fail for some reasons to give them away, but they should wait only for the expiry of their three monthly illness in the contrary case.[47] Parasera-Madhaviya permits a guardianless girl to select a husband with the necessary qualifications before reaching puberty.[48] However, in the absence of other corroboration evidences it is very difficult to ascertain how far these radical rules were put into actual practice.

The popularity of early marriages went on increasing in Mughal times also. Some enlightened rulers like Akbar disliked them and recommended to their subjects that marriages should be performed after the attainment of puberty.[49] The advice, however, produced no effect. A number of foreign travellers and merchants tell us that boys and girls were married in India several years earlier than the time of puberty. Fitch, a 16th century English trader, has noted that boys and girls were married at Murshidabad in Bengal at the age of 10 and 6 respectively.[50] Manucci tells us that during the 17th century girls were often married before they were able to speak, but never after the age of 10.[51] He also refers to an interesting case of a girl in Sind, who gave birth to a male child when she was of only nine years of age.[52]

Besides, we also get incidental references to early marriages in the contemporary literature and more particularly in the Bengali literature. In Mukundaram's 'Kavikankan Chandi', for example, we find Kalketu himself making a statement to his wife, Phullara, to the effect that he had been married to her during his infancy.[53] In Dvija Madhava's 'Mangal Chandeer Geet,' we also find a reference to Dhanapati's marriage with Lahana when the former was only five years of age.[54]

The rigidity of the custom, coupled with the celebration of the marriage at a very tender age, left no room whatsoever for either the bride or the bridegroom to have time to think of a mate of her or his own choice. The custom left it solely to the discretion of parents, or of the nearest relatives and friends to arrange the match.[55] But there seems to have been greater liberty for girls belonging to high class Rajput families to choose their husbands. The princess of Rupnagar, charmed with the gallantry of Rana Raj Singh of Mewar, invited him "to bear her from the impending union with the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb." Sometimes a romantic lady fixed the price of her hand. Tarabai, the daughter of Rao Surthan, promised to marry the youth who would recover her father's domain Todah from the Pathens.[56] Jaimal, the brother of Prithvi Raj, won her.[57] Karamdevi, the beautiful daughter of the Mohil chieftain, took the risk of renouncing her betrothal with the heir of the Rao of Mander and chose to be the bride of Sadhu, heir of Pugal, whose admiration she had won.[58] In an important Oriya work of the 16th century entitled 'Ichchawati Haran' by Banamali Das, we learn that the heroine, Ichchawati, married her beloved. Charubrahma, who was poor and unhappy in many ways and she held that monetary considerations did not count in love.[59] Sometimes letters were exchanged between lovers before the marriage. In Padmavat we find Ratansena and Padmavati exchanging letters through the parrot Hiramana.[60]

It is interesting to note that the foreign travellers like Fitch,[61] Linschoka[62] and Thevenot[63] clearly refer to a contemporary practice of maintaining a gap for a certain number of years between the performance of the formal ceremonies connected with the marriage and the actual commencement of the conjugal life. Manucci also refers to this system thus : "But the father and mother do not deliver their daughter to the son-in-law until she has attained puberty. This event is celebrated with all possible solemnity and even greater obscenity.[64] An almost similar kind of practice, generally connected with early marriages, continues to exist even today, in some parts of Bihar and U.P., and it is popularly known as 'Gauna' or 'Dviragamana'. Besides these rituals and customs, it is also reported that there was the custom of playing dice after the completion of the marriage. The bride and bridegroom naturally played the game. In the case of child marriage the bride was sent after a period of one year, two and half years, five years and seven years according to her age and this was called second marriage or Rukshadi.

Scholars are divided in their opinion regarding the factors which led to the child-marriage. According to C.V. Vaidya,[65] child-marriage began to prevent the womenfolk from becoming Baudha Bhiksuni. But Dr. Raj Bali Pandey holds that the child-marriage was introduced to save the womenfolk from falling a prey to the cupidity of foreign invaders who began to invade North-Western India in the 3rd and 4th centuries B.C. [66] According to Tavernnier,[67] who visited India in the 17th century A.D., Hindus resorted to early marriage of their daughters as protection against Muslim raids as this would prevent the victors to carry off the married women. It also acted as a safeguard against vices and helped the bride to know her husband before physical consummation. Again this period was a period of sensuality and sexual indulgence. Dr. K.M. Ashraf rightly points out that with the growth of general sensuality and sexual indulgence, an unhealthy attitude developed on all sides. People began to put a very exaggerated value on the chastity of women, exactly in the same measure as they encouraged its absence among men.[68] The spirit of the age is reflected in Amir Khusrau's Matla-ul-Anwar "A girl on whom reflections were cast regarding her chastity could never expect to find any respectable person to marry her even though the accusations were proved to be absolutely groundless.[69] Again the economic structure of the joint family was ideally suited for early marriage. There was no need for a man to be economically independent to get married. As a matter of fact, marriage was not an individual responsibility but rather the joint responsibility of the family. A boy often married at the age of 10 or 12, and his child-wife lived in the house till she reached puberty when the marriage was consummated. Both the boy and the girl, as members of the joint household, were entitled to live under the ancestral roof and share, with others, board and lodging. When the young man entered the ancestral occupation which did not entail his departure from his home, he stayed with his wife in the family; when service or business necessitated his leaving his native village or town, he usually went alone, leaving his wife in the household and sending his savings to the head of the family which went to the common pool.[70] There also arose an added incentive to child-marriage in the ancient Hindu belief that the human husband of a girl was actually her fourth; when the public hair began to appear, the God Soma was thought to enjoy a maiden, when breasts grew, a Gandharva or celetial quirister, and at menstruation, the God Agni. Such behaviour of the celetials came to be considered highly objectionable in later times, though considered proper in earlier ages. Hence, later law-givers insisted that girls were to be married before the appearance of the public hair and the breasts, and before the celetials developed interest in them.[71] Thus many factors - political, social, economic and religious - had contributed to the continued practice of child-marriage during the period under review. Dr. Altekar has pointed out certain other factors which led to the popularity of early marriages. According to him the upper section of society began to follow the example of the members of lower classes who married their daughters at a very early age because of the greed of bride-price, a custom which was fairly common among them. Secondly, he thinks that the girl's parents were always keen to avail of the earliest opportunity to get a suitable bride-groom in a cast-ridden society where the field of selection had become confined to a few sub-castes. Thirdly, by marrying their daughters at a young age the parents freed themselves from the worry about their daughter's future. In case the father died and the mother became a Sati, the girl had her husband and his family to look after her, if she were married. Lastly, Dr. Altekar also opines that as a result of the satisfactory economic condition in the society and the prevalence of joint family system, people did not feel the necessity of postponing the marriage till the boy became an earning member.[72]

Abul Fazl refers to eight forms of marriage prevalent among the Hindus viz. Brahma, Daiva (of the Devas), Arsha (Rishis), Prajapatya (of the prajapatis), Asura (of the Asuras), Gandharva (of the Gandharvas), Rakshasa (of the Rakshasa) and Paisacha (of the Pisachas).[73] Abul Fazl's forms of marriage tally with the eight forms of marriage known to the ancient Smritis which have been quoted with pedantic thoroughness by the digest writers of the period like Visvesvarabhatta Madhavacharya and others.

In Brahma form, the father of the bride gave his daughter to a man, learned in Vedas, and of a good character when the bride's father himself invited. The Daiva form involve the gift of the daughter to a priest who duly officiated at a sacrifice during the course of its performance. In Arsha form the father gave away his daughter after receiving from the bridegroom for the fulfilment of the sacred duties, a cow and a bull or two pairs of these animals. In Prajapatya form the father gave away his daughter to the bridegroom by addressing the couple with the mantram "may both of you perform together your dharma." In Asura form, the bridegroom had to give money to the father of Kinsman of the bride. The Gandharva form required the mutual love and consent of the couple to bring about the union. The Rakshasa form involved the forcible abduction of a maiden by a man. It was the capture of the bride by force. The Paisacha form was the most worst type of marriage. In it the man approached the girl by stealth while she was sleeping or intoxicated. Of these eight forms, the first six were lawful for a Brahmana, the four last for a Kshatriya and the same four, excepting the Rakshasa rite, for a Vaisya and a Sudra.

Mirza Muhsin Kashmiri, in his work entitled "Dabistanu'l ~~l~~ Mazahile' also refers to the different types of Hindu marriages (Khastari), viz. 'Audah', 'Asroodah,' 'Kandarva Vibhaha,' 'Chhevibhaha' and 'yashachya Vibhaha'. In the first type, i.e. 'Audah', the father of a girl used to search out his son-in-law, and after giving some money to him, he gave him his daughter. In another type known as Asroodah (marriage by capture), marriage was always attended with the forcible abduction of a maiden from her home by a man, married or unmarried, while she wept and her relatives were wounded while offering resistance. This type of marriage compares with the Rakshasa form as referred to by Manu. Kandarva Vibhaha was a marriage by mutual consent of the intending bride and the bridegroom, but without the express sanction of the society and a solemn ceremony. It was often done in a trice, as a result of love at first sight. Chhevibhaha was also observed by the power of sword. Yashachya Vibhaha as already mentioned was celebrated after negotiations with the respective guardians with the help of some type of magic.[75]

Marriage generally took place between the boy and the girl of the same caste or sub-caste as it is to-day. Abul Fazl has referred to Inter-caste marriages in exceptional circumstances. Hindu in upper class disliked inter-caste marriage but in lower castes it continued. Dharmasastras have also laid down that marriage must take place between persons of the same Varna.[77] However, if need be, Chandesvara and the author of Madanaparijata permit a Brahmana to marry girls of other castes one after another in the regular (anuloma) order.[78] According to Yajnavalkya, a Brahmana can marry four wives, one from each Varna, the Kshatriya can marry three wives, one from his own

Varna and one from each of the next two Varnas; the Vaisya can marry two wives; and the Sudra can marry only one wife.[79] However, Anuloma Vivaha was thought to be a less desirable course.[80] Alberuni says that though the Brahmanas were allowed to marry girls of other castes, they never married any woman except one of their own caste. Pratiloma Vivaha i.e. marriage with the girls of superior caste has been deprecated by almost all Hindu sastrakaras and the offspring of such marriage was considered despicable (Varna Samskara).[81] This is also corroborated by Alberuni's statement that nobody was allowed to marry a woman of a caste superior to his own.[82]

Again "the Smriti authorities repeat the old exogamous rules forbidding marriages on the ground of sameness of gotra and pravara as well as of sapindra relationship between the parties to the match and they extend the last relationship to seven degrees on the father's side and five degrees on the side of the mother."[83] This is also corroborated by Alberuni that according to their marriage law it is better to marry a stranger than a relative. The more distant the relationship of a woman with regard to her husband the better. It is absolutely forbidden to marry related women both of the direct descending line, viz. a grand daughter or great grand daughter, and of the direct ascending line, viz. a mother, grand-mother or great grand-mother. It is also forbidden to marry collateral relations, viz. a sister, a niece, a maternal or paternal aunt and their daughters, except in case the couple of relations who want to marry each other be removed from each other by five consecutive generations. In that case the prohibition is waived, but, notwithstanding, such a marriage is an object of dislike to them.[84] Ibu Battuta also says that they (Hindus) do not marry among their relations, unless those who are cousin six times removed.[85]

There were cases of inter-religious marriages during the Mughal period. Hindus never negotiated with Muslims but some Rajputs started this due to their political game and Mughals too co-operated due to political and stratigical importance. There had been marriages before between the Hindus and Muslims but the practice of willing inter-marriage began from the time of Akbar and continued upto the reign of Farrukh-Siyar (1713-1719) was of vital importance. The marriage of Raja Bharmal's daughter was an important marriage of its kind which opened a new era of policy of conciliation.[86] This was followed by the marriages of other Rajput princesses, such as those of Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Kotah, etc. with the Mughal emperors and their sons.[87] Jahangir had married princess Man Bai of Amber in 1585.[88] In 1586, he married Jodha Bai or Jagat Gosain,[89] the daughter of Udai Singh, the Mota Raja and the daughter of Rai Singh of Bikaner.[90] After his accession, he married the daughter of Jagat Singh, the eldest son of Raja Man Singh.[91] He also married the daughter of Rawal-Bhun of Jaisalmer and called her by the title of Malika Jahan.[92] Ajit Singh,[93] the ruler of Marwar gave his own daughter Bai Indra Kunwar to Farrukh Siyar and thus a chair of relationship was established between the rulers of Rajasthan and the Mughals.

Since the negotiated system of marriage was the most popular form of marriage, conferring their children in marriage and supervising the attendant customs and ceremonies was the privilege of the parents, especially the father. "The marriage of their children involved many delicate and complicated problems, for instance, those of family status, ancestral rites and traditions, and the social honour of the parties. The parents usually carried out their respohsibilities most scrupulously in

4 every detail. Marriage was more a family question than a personal concern of the marrying couple."[94]

Before the settlement of marriage constellations (Rasis) of the boy and the girl were examined with the help of Jyotisis.[95] If the Jyotisis gave green signal then the parties concerned agreed to the wedding of their two children, the future bride and bridegroom. This agreement was celebrated with a suitable ceremony called Tilak i.e. betrothal ceremony.[96] Dr. Chopra[97] has also referred to 'Tilak' ceremony and such other allied functions in this context. He has also described how marriages were celebrated with pomp and show. Processions were taken out on this occasion. Different social customs like binding round the wrist of the bridegroom, a peace of cloth containing some particular things has been also referred by Tulsidas. A mundap is generally set up in the bride's house. Jayasi[98] and Manucci[99] refer to various details in this context. Instead of going into all these minute details, it would be suffice to observe here that various customs of Hindu marriages differed according to the caste and other economic and geographical factors. Various recreations, feasting, music and decoration also add grandeur to the function. Dr. Chopra has studied the problems quite sincerely and seriously and has observed thus :

> 'After such preliminary ceremonies as presentation of garments for the bride etc., the principal marriage rituals commenced at a fixed hour in the booth where the pair had been brought and seated on a raised platform. A fairly comprehensive account of the marriage, rituals may be found in the 'Padmavat', 'Ram Charit Manas' and 'Sur Sagar'. The narrations of the European travellers, usually based on hear say are not reliable of these rituals, which were long and tedious, themost important and widespread were the solemn handing over of the maiden by her father (Kanyadana), the joining of the right hands of the bride and bridegroom (Panigrahana) respectively, the recitation of the Vedic formula including speech by the bridegroom to the bride assenting to their union, the making of libations to the fire, and the three fold circumambulation of the fire, the seven steps taken together by the wedded pair and finally the taking away of the bride to her new home by the bridegroom. The bride and the bridegroom would also put garlands around each other's neck.[100] Vermillion was the last symbol of performance of marriage and the same night Suhagrat was celebrated in Kohbar room.

After marriage the last rite was the departure of the girl from her paternal house where she had spent her days from childhood. Generally child marriage was performed, therefore the girl was not sent with her husband and she had to live in her father's house for a fixed period or gauna which was determined according to age of the girl. Gauna or Ruksadi was performed after three years, five years or seven years since the date of marriage. This scene was full of tragedy. The bride departed with bridegroom amidst the weeping of her parents, brothers, sisters and companions.[101] They accompanied her to some distance on the way.[102] At the time of departure the mother of the bride gave instructions to her daughter to serve her husband faithfully and not to displease the other members of her husband's family.[103]

So far marriage expenses are concerned, although it can be said that in comparison to Muslims, Hindu marriages were less expensive but even ordinary Hindu had to spend about four to five thousand rupees on a marriage. This is recorded[104] in a standard journal that sometimes the well-to-do Hindus had to spend near about fifty thousand on marriage. Of course some references testify to the fact that expenses on marriage were made quite lavishly.

The practice of dowry, a social curse, which has rather become an integral part of the present day marriage system, was also prevalent among the Hindus of the period under survey. The marriage of the Hindu girls was a difficult problem because of the custom of dowry (Dahej). It was given at the time of the marriage of the girl by her parents. It consisted of presents like jewels, ornaments, furniture, elephants, horses, maids and other articles of luxury. It was an old custom and gradually it became rigorous.[105] This system was prevalent more among the rich than among the commoners.[106] It also appears that it was absent among the Brahmins.[107] The nature of dowry varied according to the economic standard and the social status of the parties concerned. Both Mukundaram and Dvija Madhava refer to pan (dowry) in the marriage of Kalketu with Phullara.[108] In the 'Haribamsa' we find a reference to its existence in Orissa.[109] Marriage presents were popularly known as 'Jautuka', in Bengal as well as in Orissa and 'dahej' in Bihar, portions of modern U.P. and Rajasthan. The foreign travellers also took notice of the system of dowry prevalent in India.[110]

Another form of dowry was also in vogue in those days. In this it was the bride's side and not the bridegroom's which received the dowry. It was prevalent in medieval Bengal.[111] and it seems to have continued there as late as the mid-18th century.[112] There was also a curious custom of giving away a younger sister of the bride to the bridegroom as a part of dowry.[113] This second form of marriage was particularly followed in cases of aged and moneyed grooms who wanted to marry young girls. In this way references to the practice of purchasing brides are also found.[114] This practice continues even today among some sections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Prevalence of dowry in the society was due to excessive emphasis on caste marriage. Dowry system was generally unknown in early societies, and the same was the case with ancient Hindus. In rich and royal families some gifts were given to sons-in-law at the time of marriage. The Atharvaveda incidentally refers to royal brides, bringing with them the dowry of a hundred cows.[115] Draupadi, Subhadra and Uttara also brought with them rich presents of horses, elephants and jewels, at the time when they left their parents' homes after their marriages. In Raghuvamsa we find the king of Vidarbha sending handsome presents with his sister Indumati at the time of her departure with her husband after her marriage.[116] These presents, however, can hardly be called dowries, for they were voluntarily made after the marriage out of pure affection. There are no references either in Smritis or in dramas to the dowry. It is only in medieval times that we find the dowry system assuming alarming proportions. The dowry systems had become a positive evil of great magnitude from about the 13th or 14th dentury A.D.[117]

The relation between wife and husband has been considered sacred in Hindu society since ancient times. This also holds good for the medieval period. Alberuni says that in all consultations and emergencies they take the advice of the women.[118] He further adds that husband and wife can only be separated by death, as they have no divorce.[119] The Manusmriti has declared that mutual fidelity till death is the summary of the highest dharma for husband and wife.[120] Manu further exhorts that once they are united by the nuptial ceremony, they must always exert themselves to see that they are never at variance with each other, and that they ever remain faithful to each other.[121] Digests of the period have repeated the old Smriti view regarding the mutual duties of the husband and the wife. According to Madhavacharya, it is the duty of the husband to maintain his wife properly, irrespective of her age, provided she is of good behaviour.[122] Chandesvara recommends that the husband should be punished heavily for deserting his chaste and gentle wife so that he may be compelled to take her back.[123] According to Vyavahara-Vivekoddyota (319) the husband deserting his faithful wife should be fined and compelled by the king to take her back, failing which the husband should be made to pay her one-third of his property if he is rich, and what is sufficient for her maintenance in the shape of bad food and so forth.[125] On the other hand, the wife has the obligation of leading a life of studied dependence, of sobriety, and above all of absolute devotion and loyalty to her husband. She should lead a life of ascetic restraint during the absence of husband.[126] She should be obedient to her husband.[127]

From the above-mentioned mutual duties of the husband and wife, and the marriage ceremonials, we find that the relation of a Hindu wife with her husband was dignified but dependent. She had to do many duties. Her first important duty on entering her new home was to adapt herself to the traditions and sentiments of the house of which she now became a member. With her husband she had to manage the household affairs clearly and efficiently. Manu observes that she should undertake the management of household affairs, collection and expenditure of her husband's wealth, preparing for food, keeping everything clean in the house and fulfilling all the dharma obligations.[128] In addition to that she had to nurse her children and bring them up.

The account of marriage would be incomplete without a reference to Polygamy. Both Monogamy (The practice of having only one wife) and polygamy (The practice of having more than one living wife) were prevalent in Hindus right from the ancient period to the Mughal period. The common man was monogamous. Polygamy often prevailed in the rich and ruling sections of society. The rich probably regarded plurality of wives as a proof of their wealth, reputation and social position. The kings and nobles found it a useful instrument in strengthening their political power by contracting numerous but judicious matrimonial alliances. The main reason, however, for the occasional occurrence of polygamy even among ordinary classes was the great anxiety that was felt for the preservation and continuance of the family. For offering the prescribed oblations to ancestors so as to secure their continuance in heaven, a son was absolutely necessary, and so society permitted the husband to take a second wife if the first one was barren.[129] Alberuni refers to the practice of polygamy among the Hindus thus, "A man may marry one to four wives. He is not allowed to take more than four; but if one of his wives die, he may take another one to complete the legitimate number. However, he must not go beyond it."[130] At another place Alberuni says, "some Hindus think that the number of the wives depends upon the caste, that, accordingly, a Brahman may take four, a Kshatriya three, a Vaisya two wives, and a Sudra one ....."[131] Nicolo Conti speaks of this practice thus, "The inhabitants of central India ~~at~~ are only allowed to marry one wife, in the other parts of India polygamy prevails generally, excepting among those Christians who have adopted the Nestorian heresy, who are spread over the whole of India, and confine themselves to one solitary mate."[132]

The prevalence of the practice of polygamy among the richer sections of the Hindus is also corroborated by literary evidences. In Qutban's "Mrigavati" we find the hero Kunwar having two wives named Mrigavati and Rukminie.[133] Maulana Daud Dalmai, in his "Chandayan" refers to the eighty-four queens of Ras Mahr.[134] In Jayasi's Padmavat, Ratansena has two wives named Nagmati and Padmavati.[135] In Krittivasa's "Ramayana" we also find king Dashrath, who was issueless, marrying seven hundred and fifty girls, the three important queens being Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi.[136] Chandbardai also refers to the Chauhan King Prithviraj as a great polygamist in his monumental work "Prithwiraj Raso." There are references to his different marriages, viz. 'Ichhani Vibaha',[137] 'Pundir-Dahinee Vibaha',[138] Pritha Vibaha',[139] 'Hansavati Vibaha'[140] etc. Varthema refers to the practice of exchanging wives among the Pagan merchants of calicut,[141] which also reveals to us the polygamous life of the Hindus during the sultanate period.

Similarly all Rajput princes of the Mughal period had nine wives on an average. Maharana Pratap (1540-1579 A.D.) had eleven wives,[142] Rai Singh[143] (1594-1612 A.D.) of Bikaner had six and Abhaya Singh[144] (1724-1749 A.D.) of Jodhpur had twelve. It is difficult to say whether all the wives were accorded equal treatment. Manucci also refers to the prevalence of this practice among the Hindus thus : 'It results that the man may marry again several wives, either successively or simultaneously, for among the Hindus there is no prohibition against having several wives. Both Mukundaram and Dvija Madhava, refer to the story of a rich merchant, Dhanapati, marrying his second wife, Khullana, although the first one, Lahana was alive.[146] InGhanaram Chakravarty's Dharmamangal,' we find that the hero, Lausen, had married four women,Kalinga, Amala, Bimala, and Kanara.[147] In Pratap Roy's 'Sasisena', we also learn that the hero, Ahimanikya, married his second wife, Chandrabani.[148] The famous Hindi poet, Bihari Lal, also makes frequent references to the prevalence of polygamy and the bitter relations existing between the co-wives in the household of a polygamist.[149]

Polygamous marriages were generally not very happy. Multiplicity of co-wives was responsible for intrigues, and poisoning of husbands or sons. One of the panels at Rajsamudra carving[150] and a contemporary painting[151] depict scenes of unhappiness and misery in polygamous houses. It was only in rare cases that this institution did not produce unhappiness. The Satrunjaya Inscription[152] of V.S. 1587 (1530 A.D.) records that Pana's two wives were devoted to their husband, and were charitable, good natured and virtuous.

Akbar, though polygamous himself, wanted to check polygamy for the general populace. Abul Fazl writes, 'Nor does His Majesty approve of every one marrying more than one wife; for this ruins a man's health and disturbs the peace of home.'[153]

Badaoni also refers to the introduction of a custom by the emperor for checking polygamy thus : ' ..... that people should not have more than one legal wife, unless he had no child. In any other case the rule should be one map and one woman.'[154] In spite of this it appears that polygamy continued to exist amonç the aristocratic and higher sections of Hindus.

As polygamy involved extra financial burden, general mass among the Hindus during the Mughal period were not in a position to indulge in the expensive luxury of having more than one wife. According to Abul Fazl, the Hindus did not marry again unless the wives were barren.[155] Referring to kingdom of Gujarat Barbosa says, " ..... The Bramenes (Brahmanas) and also the Baweanes (Banias) many one wife only, according to our practice, but once only, not a second time."[156] Delavale, who visited India in the first quarter of the 17th century, writes that Hindus take but one wife and never divorce her till death, except for the cause of adultery.[157] Thus it becomes clear that Hindus, with the exception of a small number of princes and very wealthy persons, generally led a monogamous life.

Polyandry (The practice of having a common wife by so many people) was also known since ancient period. The fiMe Pandav brothers shared Draupadi as a common wife.[158] Referring to the Hindu women of calicut, Varthema says, " .... And amongst the other classes of Pagan, one woman has five, six and seven husbands, and even eight. And one sleeps with her one night, and when the woman has children, she says it is the child of this husband or of that husband, and thus the children go according to the word of the woman."[159]

So far as divorce is concerned we find that it was not allowed among the Hindus, except in the cases of low castes and the Shudras,[160] and this continues even today in many parts of this country. Marriages among the upper caste Hindus were indissolvable and as such, the cruel hands of death alone could separate a couple from each other.[161]

No Muslim writer enlightened us regarding the revocation of marriage (remarriage). But some smrtis allowed women to remarry in exceptional circumstances. Parasara permitted a woman to have a second husband under one of the five situations, viz., if she does not hear from her first husband for long, or if he dies or takes to asceticism, or loses his virility or becomes degraded.[162] Vasistha declared that a married woman was entitled to remarry if her husband went abroad and did not return before the end of the waiting term, which according to him varied in case of each of the four castes. "A wife of a Brahmana caste who has issue shall wait for five years and one who has no issue, for four years; the wife of a Kshatriya who has issue for five years and one who has no issue for three years the wife of a Vaisya caste who has issue, for four years and without issue for two years; the wife of a Sudra, who has issue, for three years and who has none, for one year.[163] Widows had no right to remarry. Child widows were permitted to remarry by some law-givers such as Vasistha, Bandhayana and Laghusatatapa.[164] But later this too was prohibited.

After referring to this important social ceremony that is marriage, now we shall refer to the last ceremony that is 'Sraddha' and 'tarpan'. We do not get much information from Muslim sources regarding the death ceremonies of the Hindus. However, from random references we have some information regarding this. Death to a Hindu was not the end of his journey but a change in the journey from one life to another. Naturally picturesque rites and ceremonies attended his death and after. Whenever it was felt that the death of a Hindu was near at his bed-side, his body was laid on the floor to prepare his soul to depart peacefully and without discomfort. Priests were called to chant Vedic mantras and alms were given to the poor and needy by his kith and kins. Cow was offered to a Brahmana and sacred water of the Ganges was put in his mouth. After the soul left the body the corpse was laid on the floor plastered with cow-dung and covered with Kusa, with the head resting towards the north and the feet facing the south. Drops of Ganges water, leaves of Tulsi plant and caste-mark on the forehead were required before the corpse was taken away to be placed on bier for final disposal. The relatives and friends of the dead, headed by the family priest carried the bier in a procession, upon their shoulders. Although throwing the dead body in the water or burial was not unknown to the Hindus, yet burning of the corpse was universally popular amongst the Hindus during this period.[165] Until the corpse was consumed by the fire, all people sat there on one side.[166] Swami Sivanand[167] has also pointed out how the dead body was cremated. He has also highlighted the advantages of cremation. Cremation is generally performed at the bank of the river or even at such other places. This fact has been also corroborated by historians.[168] Those who went to the funeral ground were considered impure and after their return from there purified themselves by bathing outside the town.[169] The bodies of the children who were below three years were not burnt.[170]

After the funeral a prescribed period of 12 to 30 days, varying from caste to caste, was spent in performing various ceremonies. These included superstitious rites as well and were taken recourse to ensure that the spirit of the deadman did not return. For the first ten or twelve days after death food and water was due to him because he was regarded as still living in a sense. The house, where man or woman had expired, was considered to remain impure for certain days during which usually no food was cooked and fire burnt in the hearth. The family slept on the floor and during this period many ceremonies were performed to help the disembodied spirit not to fall in Pretyoni and to have an easy passage to the next world. For this the nearest relation, who had lighted the funeral pyre was required to live on rice pudding during the prescribed period to help the departed soul to get sufficient strength and freedom from earthly chains to undertake its journey. The shraddha ceremony was the last of such ceremonies by which time the soul of the deceased was supposed to have reincarnated in accordance with the law of

Karma.[171] Abul Fazl has studied the problem with sense of detail and has observed that married women who are dead were cremated with usual full dress as a Suhagin. Instead of further going into details it may be just concludingly observed here that the then Hindus followed more or less similar funeral rites and other ceremonies of Sraddha which are being followed now-a-days. Often confusion arose about the mode to be adopted for those Hindu women who loved a Muslim man and later on died. In such cases first attempts were made to burn her failing thereby she was buried by the side of her lover's grave.

After the death of mother and father it was the holy duty of a son to perform last Sraddhakarma at [redacted]Gaya for their final salvation from the circle of ghost. Gaya is famous even today for this belief among Hindus and a fair for this purpose is held every year which is called Pitripaksh Mela. Tabiz, Mantra, Karmkand, etc. were important rituals which were performed according to religious believes and practices. Separate kind of worship, Mantra and Karmkand were performed for all deities. This was the reason that priests played an important role in Hindu society. Many articles were given to priests in charity for the salvation of a dying soul. It was also believed that all charitable things are available in the same form in the heaven for the comfort of a dead soul.

Footnotes

1. Bhagavata Dashmaskandha (illustrated) of V.S. 1667, f.39.
2. Kadambari by Banabhatt, p. 135.
3. In case of poorer people it could only be an earthen pitcher.
4. It is a summary of the description given in the Kadambari, pp. 136-137.
5. Kadambari, p. 148; TM, pp. 63-64.
6. Sachau, II, p. 157.
7. Madhumalati, p. 18.
8. Sachau, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 181.
9. Sachau, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 156.
10. Ain. by Abul Fazl, Vol. II, p. 188.
11. Asvalayana Grihasutra, 1.15, 1-4, with the commentary of Narayana, Niranay Press, Bombay, 1894.
12. Manu, 2.29
13. Padmavat, p. 61; Madhumalati, p. 18.
14. Padmavat, p. 61.
15. Sachau, Vol.II, p. 156.
16. Aprarka, p. 36, commentary on Yajnavalkyasmriti, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, Puna, 1903-04.
17. Padmavat, p. 61.
18. Sachau, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 157.

19. Bandhayana-Grihayasutra, 1.12 Edited by R.Shamasastri, Mysore, 1920.

20. Tod, II, pp. 739-40.

21. Storia, II, p. 343.

22. A.N., III, pp. 58 and 260, Tr. III, pp. 83 and 378.

23. Altekar, p. 9.

24. Tod, II, pp. 739-40.

25. Sanjay Thesis, p.

26. Sachau, op.cit., p. 125.

27. Sachau, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 154.

28. Manusmriti, IX. 96, quoted in Prabhu,P.H., op.cit., p. 149.

29. Manu, III.4, quoted in R.M.Das's 'Women in Many and his seven commentators'; Kanchana Publication, Varanasi,p.113.

30. Manu, X.45, quoted in Prabhu,P.H., op.cit., p. 150.

31. Mahabharata, Adiparva, 74, 40-41, quoted in Prabhu,P.H., op.cit., p. 150.

32. The position of women in Hindu civilization, by A.S. Altekar, p. 49.

33. Ibid., p. 56.

34. Dvashayakavya, VII. 66, 73, 74; Prthvirajavijaya, V.32, ECD, pp. 26, 124.

35. Samvarta S. 66-67 (SS, p. 114); Parasara S., II. 7; Vyasa S. II. 7 (SS, p. 356), Samkha S., XV.8(SS,p.388).

36. On Manu, IX. 4.

37. Ibid., IX. 92; Parasara S. XII. 5-6.

38. Parasara, S. VIII. 7.

39. Sachau, Vol. II, p. 131.

40. URC, I. 20.

41. Padmavat, p. 63.

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48. Parasara-Madhaviya,Vol.I, pp. 483-84.

49. Ain., p. 277.

50. Dasgupta, p. 131.

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52. Storia,I, p. 209.

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56. Tod, I, p. 441.

57. Tod, II, p. 783.

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115. V.17,12.

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120. Manu, IX, 101.

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122. Parasara - Madhaviya, Vol.I, p. 506.

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161. North Indian Social Life during Mughal period by P.N. Ojha, p. 132.

162. SNS, III. 21.

163. XVII. 67-71.

164. Vasistha S., XVII. 66 (SS,p.215); Bandhayana S., IV. I.V. 18 (SS, p. 477); Laghusatatapa S., 44.

165. B.P. Sinha, Thesis, p.

166. HC, V, pp. 171-2.

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CHAPTER - V

CUSTOM OF SATI AND JAUHAR

SATI

The custom of sacrificing the wife at the husband's death existed among the Aryans in the Indo-European period. By the time they entered India, it had, however, gone out of vogue. We do not find it mentioned in the Avesta. Nor is it referred to in the funeral hymns of the Rigveda, where it would certainly have been mentioned if it had been in existence. The Buddhist literature also is unaware of the custom of Sati. We begin to get stray references to the custom of Sati from about 300 B.C.[1] The Mahabharata, a major portion of which was composed at about this time, records only a few cases of Sati. The most important among them is that of Madri.[2] In the Mausalaparvan of the Mahabharata. We find that four wives of Vasudeva Devaki, Bhadra, Rohini and Madira ascend his funeral pyre.[3] When the news of Krishna's death reaches Hastinapura, five of his wives, Rukumini, Gandhari, Sahya, Haimavati and Jambavati ascend the funeral pyre, of course without their husband's body. Satyabhama retires to forest for practising penance.[4]

The custom began to become gradually popular from 400 A.D. It is known to Vatsyayan, Bhasa, Kalidasa and Sudraka. During the period 700-1000 A.D., Satis became more frequent in northern India and quite common in Kashmir. The history of Kashmir during this period teems with the cases of Satis in royal families. Kalhana, the historian of the province, is surprised to find that even notoriously unchaste queens like Jayamati, the wife of king Uchchala should be seen immolating themselves on their husband's funeral pyres.[5] The custom of Sati, however, was yet to obtain a footing in South India down to 900 A.D.[6] The Sati custom began to have an appreciable effect on society after 1300 A.D. Among the ruling Rajput families of northern India the custom became firmly established by this time.

Numerous sati stones that are to be seen in almost all parts of India belonging to the 17th and the 18th centuries, show that the Sati custom was frequently followed by the commoners as well. There are, for instance, 51 Sati stones in the Saugar district ranging in date from C.1450 to 1824 A.D., attesting to the women of all classes including weavers, berbers and masons becoming Satis.[7]

Widows had to suffer a great deal of humiliation and misery and the only way for them to escape from all this was to perform Sati.[8] The extreme devotion which was inculcated in minds of the Indian women for their husbands impelled them to end their lives on the pyre than to bear the pangs of separation. The custom gained popularity mainly due to super natural beliefs that Sati was a sure means of reunion of wife with her dead husband,[9] and that by performing it the widow managed to wipe out the sins committed by her husband.[10] This practice was prevalent in some parts of India but was not in vogue in all the communities. It was not popular before the advent of the Muslims.[11] In due course of time this custom became popular amongst the warrior class[12] and in the royal families in the Northern India.[13] Several instances of Sati are recorded from Rajasthan.[14] The Brahmin women were exempted from performing Sati.[15] Pregnant women and the ones who were called upon to act as regents were advised not to commit Sati.[16]

Among the Hindu women the custom of self-immolation or Sati continued to be popular during the sultanate period. By performing Sati they not only vindicated their deep love for their husband but also brought honour to the family.[17] Burning herself along with the dead body of the husband was considered to be a pious and honourable act on the part of the devoted wife.[18] Amir Khusrau expressed his appreciation on the selfless love and devotion which the Hindu wives had for their husbands and which impelled them to end their lives along with that of their husbands.[19] The poet pointed out that this custom was anti-Islamic in spirit and thusnot so proper for Muslim women.[20] The Hindu wives who abstained from becoming Sati brought not only dishonour to the family[21] but were also called upon to lead a rigorous secluded life of widowhood.[22] This inhumane, horrible act of Sati was considered to be an obligatory action on the part of women.[23]

It was Sultan Mohammad-bin Tughluq who resolved to eradicate this deep rooted custom which undermind the status of women.[24] The Sultan could not comprehend the idea that the death of the husband was the signal of the wife's end. Thus he insisted that widows henceforth should take the consent of the royal authority before performing Sati.[25] Provisions for widow remarriage further shook the very foundation of the Sati system.[26]

The Sati system existed in two forms. In one form, the widow burnt herself along with the dead body of her husband on the same pyre.[27] In the other, another pyre was set-up into which the widow threw herself.[28] Ibn Battutah, in his account has confirmed the popularity of both these forms.[29]

The Moorish traveller, Ibn Battutah, at Amjari[30] witnessed the elaborate method of the second form of Sati. Before the performance of Sati, for three days continuously the widows engaged themselves in several feasts and ceremonies thereby bidding a happy good-bye to the world.[31] On the fourth day the widows attired in rich costumes, decked with jewels and ornaments prepared themselves for the final act. With the aids of beautification they adorned themselves like a newly wedded bride.[32] The Brahmins accompanied them along with the rest of their relatives.[33] Trumpets, bugles and drums were played as the procession moved ahead, which created an atmosphere of jubilation and celebration.[34] Riding on a horse, the widow carried a coconut in her right hand[35] and a mirror[36] in the left and moved to an isolated place chosen for the action.The place chosen for becoming Sati,gave a glimpse of hell.[37]

Huge trees were seen by the side of a pond and nearby was a raised pavilion on which the pyre was set up. The widows took bath in the pond, gave their jewels, ornaments and garments to the Brahmins in alms.[38] This probably gave impetus to the religious people, who never raised their voice against this inhumane act. After the bath, the widows clad themselves in coarse cotton garments.[39] A pyre was prepared on the pavilion.[40] By its side stood fifteen men with wooden faggots and ten bamboo poles waiting for the arrival of the widow.[41] Seasame oil was added to the pyre which increased the intensity of the flames.[42] To avoid any nervousness on the part of the females, the flames were covered by a blanket.[43] Before embracing the flames, the widows with folded hands prayed and bade good bye to the world[44] and within seconds threw themselves into the pyre. The men by the side of the pyre threw logs of wood on the burning pyre.[45] This elaborate and inhumane mode by which Sati was performed was too much for Ibn Battutah who fainted on the site[46] and thus failed to narrate more details about the custom.

Fusion of custom and traditions was witnessed among the Hindus and Muslims during the Medieval period. The custom of and its spirit was accepted by the Muslim women also. The revolt of Ain-ul-Mulk Mahru during the reign of Sultan Mohammad-bin Tughluq provides us a positive evidence to the fact that the Muslim women were influenced by Sati. When the news of the husband's defeat and subsequently no other information reached, Ain-ul-Mulk's wife outrightly opted like a Hindu wife to perform Sati.[47]

The Vedic age was quite free from the faint of widow immolation. No Satis are anywhere mentioned, no widows burned themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands.[48] Credit goes to Manu for not authorizing the terrible practice of a widow's turning Sati through immolation.[49] The following proverb was prevalent regarding the women.

' यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ' [50]

But there is proof in the epic Ramayana that a custom has crept in which was entirely absent in Vedic times-Sahamarana or widow immolation. Rama's mother, Kausalya, expresses the wish to burn herself on the pyre of her dead husband, and by this act of Sahamarana become a Sati, exist as "perfect woman." A widow conferred a coveted mark of distinction on her family by turning

Sati, and furthered her own future interests since the Brahmins asserted that "she who voluntarily burns herself with her deceased husband will reside in Swarag (heaven) for as many thousands of years as there are hairs on the human body." It is therefore not surprising that in the other epic, Mahabharata, we find the two mothers of the Pandeva brothers, Kunti and Madri, disputing hotly with each other as to which one is to have the privilege of turning Sati. But widow immolation was still very rare in epic days, and entirely confined to royal houses and the highest caste. There was no taint as yet of the frightfulness of enforced immolation of later days.[51]

The death of husband was certainly the greatest tragedy, the saddest calamity in the life of a Hindu woman. Widow remarriage was not allowed among the Hindus, excepting certain lower castes.[52] A widow had either to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, or on a separate pyre soon after his death or had to lead a life of abysmal anguish, of unending sufferings and woe, devoid of all the charms of earthly life. The widows generally were deprived of almost all the social and customary privileges enjoyed by the women and were required to pass their lives in austerities, attended with fasting, vigil and numerous other restrictions.[53] The life of a Hindu widow was really a tale of frustration and shame, and even her appearance was considered inauspicious on many occasions. Thus, in the majority of cases, the widows realised that it was better for them to become Sati than to lead a life of bitterness and continued agony. Besides, there was also the question of prestige of the family. A popular belief had gained ground, in the minds of the people, that highest virtue for a woman was to become a Sati and, therefore, if a widow expressed her unwillingness for it, the people began to doubt her fidelity and affection towards her departed husband.[54]

The rites connected with Sati were performed both with the corpse of the husband and without it. In the former case, it was known as Sahamarana (dying in company with), or 'Sahagamana' (going along with), and in the latter case, 'Anumarana (dying in accordance with) or 'Anu-gamana' (going in accordance with). The former was preferred and it was more popular.[55]

The practice of Sati dates back to the ancient times.[56] Originally it appears to have been voluntary. The classical canonists of India have, perhaps, never sanctioned compulsory 'Sahagamana'. Manu whose famous dictum regarding the perpetual dependence of women has been referred to earlier makes provision for a pure and simple life of a widow, and he does not speak about her compulsory death on the funeral pyre of her husband.[57] Vishnu, Brihaspati and Shukra, the three other important Hindu legists, also refer to the optional nature of this custom. Vishnu, for example says, "After the death of her husband, to preserve her chastity or to ascend the pile after him ..... A good wife, who persevere, in a chaste life after the death of her husband, will go to heaven like (perpetual students, even though she has no son.)"[58] Brihaspati holds, "A wife is considered half the body (of her husband), equally sharing the result of his good or wicked deeds, whether she ascends the pile after him, or chooses to survive him leading a virtuous life, she promotes the welfare of her husband."[59] Shukra also refers to the option given to a widow thus, "when the husband is dead, the chaste women should accompany him or observe the vow, should not like to go to other's houses, and should always maintain brahamacharya or control of passions, and should give up the daily ornamentation of self."[60]

According to some writers upto the eighth century A.D., Sati was rather confined to the royal families. In the Priyadarsika we read of the wives of Vindhyaketu burning themselves after their husband's death in a battle.[61] Harsa's mother burnt herself a little before the death of her husband.[62] His sister was dissuaded with difficulty from being a Sati.[63] Of the inscriptions falling wholly within the period the Dholpur inscription of the Calramana Candamahasena speaks of his mother Kanhulla who became a Sati.[64]

How far Sati prevailed among Brahmanas is difficult to say because most of the references, inscriptional as well as literary sources refer to the custom only in the case of Kshatriya women. According to Vyasa Smrti a Brahmana widow had two courses to follow, either to be a Sati or take to asceticism after her tonsure.[65] Altekar believes that the custom began to be followed by a few Brahmana families soon after A.D. 1000.[66]

The practice of widow-burning seems to have prevailed even in ancient times.[67] In the Rig-Veda there is a reference to it.[68] Originally, the practice of Sati was voluntary. Manu seems to have made provisions for leading the life of simplicity and austerity for a widow and he does not mention about her compulsory death on the funeral pyre of her husband.[69] During the period under review, the practice of Sati became obligatory and binding in nature. The element of compulsion, in fact, turned Sati into a distressing and dreadful practice.

It is difficult to determine as to how, inspite of a fair degree of option allowed by the ancient Hindu law-givers, the practice of Sati gained such a wide currency in the Sultanate and the Mughal period and became more or less obligatory in nature. The accounts of the contemporary foreign travellers invariably refer to it, with all its rituals, and some of them even speak about the element of compulsion attached to it, which was normally exercised by the Brahman priests.[70] The Moorish traveller, Ibn Battutah says "The self-burning of widows is considered praiseworthy by the Hindus, without, however, being obligatory. When widow burns herself her Kinsfolk acquire glory and her faithfulness is highly esteemed. If she does not burn herself, she puts on coarse clothes and lives with her relatives as one who is despised for faithlessness. But she is not compelled to burn herself."[71] Ibn Battuta also refers to the story of three widows who sacrificed their life with one husband.[72] Referring to the women of Mabar, Marco Polo writes, "Many of the women also, when their husbands die and placed on the pile to be burnt, to burn themselves along with the bodies. And such women as do this have great praise from all.[73] Varthema[74] also refers to this practice. Nicolo Conti also harps on the same string about the Sati.[75] Referring to the priests Nicolo Conti observes, " ..... They have only one wife who is burnt with her dead husband. Lying by the side of the corpse, with her arm under its neck, she submits herself to the flames, without giving way to any expression of pain."[76] Bernier tries to examine the root-cause of the popularity of this practice, in those days, and says, "Many persons whom I then consulted on the subject would have persuaded me that excess of affection was the root-cause why these women burn themselves with their deceased husbands; but I soon found that this abominable practice is the effect of early and deeply rooted prejudices. Every girl is taught by her mother that it is virtuous and laudable in a wife to mingle her ashes with those of her husband, and no woman of honour will refuse compliance with the established custom."[77] Manucci also refers to Sati in details.[78] and he cites the cases of forced Sati at Agra[79] and Rajmahal.[80] Thevenot[81] also refers, in details to cases of forced Sati as well as to the ceremonies attached to this practice and they too put the larger share of the blame upon the Brahmans.

It may be mentioned here that the Mughal emperors had made it obligatory to obtain a license for the burning of widow. Probably such provision was designed to discourage the use of compulsion or social pressure in the observance of this practice, but in the absence of very strong reasons to the contrary, necessary permission was given as a matter of course.[8] On account of contact with their Hindu sisters, some of the well to-do Muslim women also seem to have observed a custom very much similar to Sati, viz. entering the husband's grave alive.[83]

Some of the Mughal emperors tried to ban this practice or at least to check it. Humayun wanted to prohibit it in the case of those widows who had passed the child-bearing age, but no adequate and effective steps were taken by him in this matter[8] Akbar could not abolish Sati altogether, but he is said to have issued an edict banning compulsion in it, which according to

Badaoni runs thus, "If a Hindu woman wished to be burnt with her husband, they should not prevent her; but she should not be forced against her will."[85] He prohibited the burning of young Hindu widows of tender years on the funeral pyres of their husbands, if their actual marriage had not been consummated.[86] Akbar's regulation against Sati was not merely a pious expression of his individual opinion. On the other hand, the Emperor is reported to have interfered personally in certain cases of Sati and stopped the performance of the rites.[87]

Emperor Jahangir also tried his best to follow the foot-steps of his illustrious father in this respect, and he is said to have prohibited Sati performed without prior royal permission, especially in the cases of young widows whose marriages had not been consummated.[88] The intending self-immolators had to obtain written permission from the local governor, and thelatter generally Moslems, would not certainly grant such permission for an act which they thought to be a sin. But Nicholas withington cites a case of Sati, performed by a widow of nearly ten years of age, inspite of the governor's orders prohibiting it.[89] Similarly, Hawkins observes that even the personal intervention of Jahangir could not succeed in preventing Sati at Agra.[90] Pelsaert, on the other hand, asserts that "there are hundreds and even thousands who do not do it."[91] Such regulations and also the personal Vigilance of these two Mughal emperors might, however, have arrested its growth to a considerable extent.

Aurangzeb appears to have taken a stern step in this direction. We learn from Manucci that the Emperor, on his return from Kashmir (December, 1663 A.D.), "issued an order that in all lands under Mughal control never again should the officials allow a woman to be burnt. This order endures to this day.[92] We are told, however, that the widows who had no children could get the permission, on special occasions, to burn themselves, but, as for the widows who had children, they were not permitted under any circumstances, to burn themselves with the bodies of their husbands. It was ordained that they should live in order to look after the education of their children.[93] In spite of such royal orders, it cannot be held that Aurangzeb succeeded in suppressing Sati altogether, although of course, the number of such cases might have fallen down. A keen observer like Manucci points out that the Brahman widows always burnt themselves on the pyres of their husbands, but among the trading classes this custom was not so universal.[94] It is true that many Muslim rulers decreed that widows should be allowed to immolate themselves only. When the necessary permission of the local Government Officer was sought and obtained. But the provision was observed more in its breach than in its observance and did not, therefore, materially check the rite because the requisite permission could be usually obtained without any difficulty whatever.

Besides the rulers, almost all the religious preachers deprecated this evil and condemned it outright. Amar Das, the Sikh Guru went so far as to declare : "They are not Satis who perish in the flames; Satis are those who live on with a broken heart."[95] It is true, voices of protest and condemnations were uttered all through the ages, and they partially succeeded as a check for a time but it soon raised its ugly head in the following centuries with terrible consequences all over the country, particularly in Bengal. It could be banned and stopped only when strict legislations were enforced by the

British rulers, though even today occasional cases of Sati prominently figure in newspapers.[96]

Besides the literary evidences, there are numerous epigraphic records which refer to the practice of Sati in medieval times. The kings made lavish grants to temples erected over the ashes of the Satis. An inscription of the Cedi Samvat 919 refers to three queens who became Satis.[97] The Temar gate stone inscription of Saka Samvat 1246 (A.D.1324) speaks of one Manikyadevi as becoming Sati on the death of her husband while the Mistra Deoli inscription in Jodhpur mentions two queens of Gohila Rana as having become Satis.[98] Moreover, we have numerous references to Sati records of A.D. 1304 and 1309 in the village of Silaiya (Damoh district, U.P.) and of Saka 1362 (1440) and 1363 (1443 A.D.) in Bamhani of the same district.[99] There are also Sati-recofds of Saka 1361 and 1366 in Patan (Jabalpur) and Singorgarh respectively.[100]

The Karnataka inscriptions throw interesting light on the state of Sati in that part of the country. In them we have only eleven cases of Sati during the period 1000-1400 A.D. and forty-one cases during 1400-1600 A.D. Most of these Satis belonged to the Nayaka and Gauda classes who formed the main fighting community of south India. Very few cases of Brahmana widows becoming Sati are recorded in them.[101] A Mysore inscription refers to a lady as going forth to the fire-pit to die.[102]

Rajasthan and Gujarat may rightly be termed as the land of Satis. The custom was firmly established by this time among the ruling Rajput families of northern India. The average Rajput princess eagerly looked to an opportunity to become a Sati. The death of every Rajput king or nobleman generally invited the death of almost every widow, except the pregnant ones or those required to act as regents. Sometimes their number was horribly large. On the death of Raja Ajita Sinha of Marwar (A.D. 1724), sixty-four women burnt themselves on his funeral pyre. When Raja Budha Simha of Bundi was drowned, eighty-four women became Sati. The instances of Padmini of Chitore and others were enoughto inspire them to practise Sati willingly and cheerfully.[103] Similarly cases of widows amongst the upper and lower classes of Hindu society committing Sati are innumerable. A Jain Inscription of V.S. 1648(1591 A.D.) mentions the names of four wives of Tara Chand of Sadri who committed Sati. Kuri, Dhanni, Vali, etc. are the names of women who burnt themselves after the death of their husbands at Merta (1680 A.D)

Jawar (1688 A.D.), Bali (1700 A.D.) respectively. It had assumed the form of an epidemic which also affected the royal families in Gujarat till the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the bards (caranas) still recite the couplets composed[104] in praise of the Satis.

The Nayakas of Madura were no exception to this general rule. In 1611 and 1620 A.D. when two rulers of this family died, as many as 400 and 700 women ascended the funeral pyres and burnt themselves. Like the royal families in Rajasthan and Gujarat a large number of women practised Sati on the death of each member of the Nayaka family.[105]

In the beginning the Sikhs did not follow this custom and their third Guru, Amaradasa had condemned this custom in strong terms (1552-1574 A.D.). But soon after when they developed into a formidable fighting community, they took to this rite as a matter of princely right. The death of Ranjit Sinha was followed by that of his four queens and seven concubines who had ascended his funeral pyre. In the period of anarchy and disorder following Ranjit's death the wives and concubines of princes and generals invariably practised Sati. The figure is on record that three women died with Maharaja Kharaga Sinha, five with

21 Basanta Simha, eleven with Kishori Simha, twenty-four with Hira Simha and 310 with Sucheta Simha.[106]

Among the ruling families of Maratha, claiming Rajput descent, Sati was rather a casual phenomenon. It was not a rule as such on the death of Shivaji and Rajarama, only one each of their wives became Satis. The queen of Shahu was compelled by her mother-in-law Tarabai to practise Sati. Similarly we have few cases of Sati in the ruling families at Satara, Nagpur, Gwalior, Indore and Baroda.

The practice was also popular with the ruling families of Bihar in medieval times (16th-18th century A.D.). The queens of the Khandavala dynasty of Mithila (Darbhanga Raj), though Brahmana by descent, practised the rite. We are told that the queens of Raja Purusottama Thakura and Raja Raghava Simha of the same dynasty burnt themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands.[107]

Sometimes force was also applied to compel unwilling widows to burn themselves. Medieval travellers record many cases of forced Satis in their accounts. Barbosa, Linscholen, Manucci, 22 Nicolò conti, Bernier, Tavernier, Pietrodella Valle, Mustaqi, Abul Fazl and others have presented both the sides of the picture. It is true that sometimes the widows wavered but it is also true that very often they betrayed such strong determination to die that foreign travellers were aghast at their boldness. They have also recorded, rather with admiration, certain cases of betrothed but not married ladies insisting on mounting the funeral pyres of their prospective husbands. All this shows that except a few cases the ladies were free in their choice, and Rajput ladies ascended the pyre with the same reckless courage with which their husbands embraced death on the battle-field.[108]

Throughout India Sati-memorial stones are found. They are very numerous in the Mysore province and the Saugar district of the central provinces. Khimlas, an old town about 41 miles from Saugar contains perhaps the largest number of these stones, 51 of which are inscribed. Their dates range from 1453 A.D. to 1823 A.D. A peculiarity of these monuments is that nearly half of them are placed on the western bank either of a stream or of a reservoir which faces towards the east.[109] The finest examples of such monuments we have in the memorials of uncertain date of the Mandi rajas bearing inscriptions which record the date of each raja's death and of the number of queens, concubines and slave-girls who were burnt on his pyre. "Even more grim than these are the grave-yards in which such memorials venerated by the Rajputs stand : each sacred spot termed 'the place of great sacrifice' is the haunted ground of legendary love."[110]

The most interesting aspect of the custom of Sati was its prevalence in a section of the Muslims of India — a practice which probably it is hard to come across anywhere else in the Muslim world. The Muslims of Rajaur (near Kashmir) observed this rite, which came to the notice of Emperor Jahangir who condemned it forthwith, stating that "they still had the marks of the times of ignorance; one of those is that just as some Hindu women burn themselves along with their husbands (bodies), so these women (the Rajaur women) are put into the grave along with their dead husbands." He could not tolerate this practice among the Muslims and issued forth a decree that "hereafter they should not do such things and whoever was guilty of them,should be capitally punished."[111]

Thus Sati was the most black inhuman evil practice which continued throughout Medieval period in Hindu society and its effects were seen till the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

JAUHAR

Jauhar was another important medieval social custom which flourished side by side with that of Sati. The very name unfolds before our mind's eye a glorious chapter of Rajput heroism and splendid sacrifices. In the history of medieval India it is a chapter written with the precious blood of the thousands of Rajput ladies who gladly embraced flames to avoid captivity and save the honour of their families from the unspeakable atrocities at the hands of the victorious enemies, especially the Muslims. Words fail to describe this horrible, yet glorious rite and the history of mankind fails to offer any parallel to this otherwise common custom among the brave Rajputs, anywhere, at any time.[112]

Jauhar was a rite when performed, a whole tribe became extinct within a few hours. It was, by and large, confined to the brave Rajputs, though other cases are not altogether lacking.[113] It was observed when a Rajput chief and his warriors were reduced to utter despair in an engagement. They usually resorted to the acts of setting fire to their holdings along with their wives and children when there was no hope of their survival, and there was every likelihood of their family falling into the hands of their enemies. The women embraced fatal end with the greatest intrepidity and pleasure, while men sallied forth to court a heroic death.[114] The battered fortresses, the ruined heaps of walls, the forlorn palaces, the broken, dusty, dumb bricks lying scattered here and there and every particle of dust flying in the thick air of Rajasthan have a blood-curdling story of their own to tell, only if they could speak.[115] The Rajputs did not know of surrender; their watch-words, in the battle-field, were victory or Death; and this custom of Jauhar was mainly intended to safeguard the honour of the womenfolk at the cost of their lives.

Jauhar was popular both in Northern and southern India.[116] Two forms of Jauhar were witnessed. In the first, the females threw themselves in a burning pyre[117] in order to avoid falling into the hands of the victor. In the second form, the males finding hard to save the integrity of the females forced them to perform Jauhar.[118] In both these cases the chastity of the females was involved. In the former the females took the initiative while in the latter the males.

The custom is of great antiquity and can be traced back to some thousand years before the dawn of christianity, though not in the form in which it was prevelent in medieval times. The earliest allusion to the Jauhar Shaka or Sakha in Muhammadan literature we have in Biladuri who says that when Dahir, the king of Sind, was slain, his wife set fire to the fort and burnt herself with all her handmaids.[119] In the Tarikh-i-yamini (accoun of the Ghaznavides) there is also mention of the performance of this rite.[120] Hasan Nizami in his Taj-ul-Maasir (1206 A.D.) refers to "Jauhar, the act of desperation peculiar with Hindu warriors who, as a last recourse, destroyed their wives and children, fought to the last, and killed themselves.[121] In Futuh-us-Salatin (1350 A.D.) Isami says that when Ranthambhor was invaded by Ala-ud-din Khalji, the fatal Jauhar was commanded, the ladies of the palace perished in flames and Rai Hammira, followed by his trusted lieutenants, came out of the impregnable fort, attacked the forces of the Khalji and was killed fighting.[122] On another occasion when Ala-ud-din invaded Chitore, a funeral pyre was lighted within "the great subterranean retreat" in chambers impervious to the light of the day and "the defenders of Chitore beheld in procession, the queen, their own wives and daughters to the number of several thousands. The fair Padmini closed the througX which was augmented by whatever of female beauty or youth could be tainted by Tatar lust. They were conveye to the cavern and the opening closed upon them leaving them to find security from dishonour in the devouring element."[123]

Again, when Alauddin attacked Jaisalmer, the undaunted heroes inspired their womenfolk to save their honour and faith; the Jauhar commenced and twenty four thousand females, from infancy to old age, "surrendered their lives, some by the sword, others in the volcano of fire. Blood flowed in torrents, while the smoke of the pyre ascended to the heavens, not one feared to die, every valuable was consumed with them."[124] It is well known how 'Jauhar' was committed by the Rai (Raja) of Kampila when his fortress was besieged by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq in order to inflict punishment on him for giving shelter to a state rebel named Baha-ud-din Gushtasp (Gushtasb).[125]

After the death of Rana Sanga, Chitore was again stormed by Bahadur Shah (1533 A.D.). The bravest having fallen, when the defeat of the Rajputs was certain, the signal was given, combustibles were quickly heaped up, magazines were excavated in the rock under which gun-powder strewed andthirteen thousand ladies led by Karnavati, mother of the Prince, were consumed at once by the devastating flames. Similarly when Akbar invaded Marwar, eight thousand gallant Rajputs, having eaten the bira (pan or betel leaves) and put on their saffron robes, threw open the gates and "the work of destruction commenced. Nine gems, five princesses (their daughters), with two infant sons, and the families of all the chieftains .... perished in the flames or in the assault of this ever memorable day."[126] The writers of the Tarikh-i-Alfi in noticing the death of Jaimal at the time of Akbar's invasion of Chitor in 1568 A.D., said that Jauhar was the name of a rite among the Hindus, and there was no escape from it.[127] Some of the contemporary literary works also refers to this universal practice among the Rajputs.[128] No doubt, 'Jauhar' symbolised the dignity of Rajput womanhood.[129] The rite, like Sati whatever its merits or demerits, evoked respect and priase from all quarters. The Muslim historians had nothing but admiration for the brave ladies who preferred death to dishonour, willingly and cheerfully. Khafi Khan, a court-historian of Aurangzeb, who could tolerate nothing Hindu, has a word of praise for this heroic deed at least. In his Muntakhabu-i-lubab or Tarikh-i-Khafi Khan, while referring to the flight of Jaswant Sinha from the battle-field, praises his brave, indomitable wife who strongly condemned her husband's action and refused to have any truck with him (1658 A.D) He says : "Women, especially Rajput women, have often a higher sense of honour than men; and for this reason will rather bear the torture of fire than suffer disgrace."[130]

The performers of Jauhar, like Sati, were much honoured and worshipped like goddesses in temples and shrines. They have become inseparable parts of the festivals and place of pilgrimage in Rajasthan. There are many places all over Rajasthan where the ashes of the heroes and heroines are enshrined symbolised by memorial stones. Tod gives us a description of a sequestered spot in a cavern of the rock near Udaipur where there is a living fountain known as go mukha (cow's mouth) under the shadow of an umbrageous bada tree. On one side of the dale is the subterranean channel called Rani-bindar which leads to suites of chambers in the rock. This was the scene of the awful Jauhar, on the occasion of Ala-ud-din's sack of chitore when the queens perished in the flames and since this devoted day "the cavern has been sacred : no eye has penetrated its gloom, and superstition has placed as its guardian a huge serpent whose 'Venomous breath' extinguishes the light which might guide intruders to the place of sacrifice."[131]

From an unpublished Persian document we learn that the rite of Jauhar was not confined to Rajasthan alone, but had, in the course of time, spread~~ed~~ to other parts of the country as wel for instance, Bihar. We have a document in our possession which, after giving the genealogy of the rulers of chautham (Paragana Farakiya in the district of Monghyr) says that in 1556 A.D. a sanguinary battle was fought between Murarasahi and Vedasahi in which the former was defeated and slain. Consequently, the ladies of his haveli (inner apartment) died by jumping into the fire-pit especially prepared for the occasion. We know of no other instance in this part of the country, but the document is unique as it shows (i) the prevalence of this rite as far as Bihar and (ii) that the rite was not confined to the Rajputs only, but also to other castes, such as Bhumihar in this case. In other words, the rite of Jauhar had gradually assumed national character symbolising bravery and heroism and fighting communities and landed aristocracy were inspired to adopt this rite to escape ignomy.[132] Jauhar, like Sati too was carried out in an elaborate way. The females took bath, coated Sandal-wood paste on their body and then threw themselves into the burning pyre.

This rite gradually spreaded to a section of the Muslims also, who formed the main fighting community on behalf of their rulers in this country.[133] They also performed Jauhar to maintain their chastity in times of political crisis.[134] During the invasion of Timur, the Muslim women of Bhatnir performed Jauhar to escape from the wrath of the invaders.[135] With the decline and fall of the Muslim power, and the end of the Rajput supremacy, the institution of Jauhar also died out its natural death.[136]

FOOTNOTES

1. The Position of women in Hindu Civilization by A.S.Altekar, pp. 117-20.

2. Mbh, 1, 138, 71-2.

3. Mbh, XVI, 7.18.

4. Ibid., XVI. 7. 73-4.

5. Rajatarangini, by Kalhan, VIII, 366.

6. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, by A.S.Altekar, p. 128.

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CHAPTER - VI

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In the field of religion Hindu women played an important role by participating in the performance of penance, fasts, worships of deities and recitation of hymns right from the ancient period.[1] Some of them even composed hymns.[2] Sacrifices were rarely made without the active participation of women.[3]

Buddhism and Jainism had a profound impact on the status of women. Initially these religious had no place for women[4], but soon they changed their attitude by taking women in their fold.[5] Various restrictions on women especially at the time of pregnancy and initiation were not only simplified, but even revoked to a considerable extent by Buddha and Mahavira.[6] The latter propounded the law that in case of an emergency like fire,flood and felony women must be rescued first.[7] Women who earned fame in Buddhist History and rose to highest stage of spiritual emancipation[8] were Gutta, Anopama, Suppiya, Sumadha, to name a few.[9]

Amongst the Hindu women idol worship[10] with Shiva as their popular deity was prevalent. They moved out in palanquin to temples to offer their prayers to their deity. Visiting of the various shrines was also popular amongst the Hindu women.[11] We find that Lord Chaitanya's wife, Nimai went down to Gaya to visit the shrine after seeking her mother-in-law's permission.[12] Jambuvati, the mother of Rana Jagat Singh, performed a holy pilgrimage to Dwarka, Mathura and Prayag, the first instance of its kind when a royal lady could travel in the Mughal territory without fear.[13]

The attitude of Sufi saints towards women was kind and liberal. They considered them as hapless halves of the society,[14] and helped in time of need.[15] Sufis had no discrimination of caste creed or colour. Sheikh Muinuddin Chisti married Ummatullah, a daughter of Hindu chief.[16] During the medieval period buying and selling of female slaves was common. But Sufi saints tried to ban this practice and made efforts to bring about a reunion of a non-Muslim girl who was sold by the parents.[17]

Hindu women were also attracted by Bhakti saints. The Bhakti saints accorded milder treatment to women in general,~~about~~ apart from granting them social freedom. They also provided the females with a great deal of concessions in spiritual field. They were accepted as disciples and could lead a life in pursuit of spiritual attainment.[18] Padmavati,[19] Sadhana[20] and Surasari.[21] were some of the prominent disciples of Ramanand Princess Rani Gaunjan was an important disciple of Guru Nanak.[22] A Brahmin widow became a well known disciple of Vallabhacharya.[23] while working for regeneration of society Guru Nanak, Kabir and Guru Amar Das gave equal status to women along with men, Chaitanya considered them to be inferior in intelligence and cause of ill-fame (vice).[24] Chaitanya is the only saint in this period who does not seem to have done much for social regeneration of women.[25] The women of other sect also followed Hinduism. During the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq a reference is found of the conversion of a Muslim girl to Hinduism by a Brahmin.[26] The Sultan who made "Shara" the basis of his administration considered it a fatal crime on the part of the Brahmin. Thus he was sentenced to death.[27]

Hindu women were expected to lead a pure and virtuous life. They were supposed to remain pure in thoughts, words and deeds.[28] Various references are found when females sacrificed their lives in order to maintain their chastity. The popularity of Sati[29] and Jauhar[30] confirm it. Amir Khusrau, in Matlaul Anwar, narrates the extent to which a woman went in order to preserve her integrity and mortality.[31]

Charity has been shown by the Hindu women right from the ancient time. Rig-Veda says : "He who gives charity goes to the highest place in heaven." Manu lays down also definite rules to be followed for acquiring this religious merit. The grant of precious metals, especially gold and silver, estates, buildings, and cows is considered highly meritorious among Hindus. People seem to have been more charitable of disposition in Mughal days than in the twentieth century. Abul Fazl admires the Indians who were always ready to come to the succour of anyone in distress and would "grude neither property, life nor reputation in his cause."[32] Alms were frequently bestowed on the needy and the deserving. Though no hard and fast rules were adhered to, Hindus preferred to give away edibles like rice, wheat, etc. in charity.[33] Charity was performed on the eve of festival, taking bath in the Ganges and on so many occasions.

The liberality of the Hindus has particularly been commended by several travellers[34] including Alberuni who mentions alms-giving as the daily routine of a Hindu[35] "who strongly believed that such acts would atone for all his sins."[36] Tavernier corroborates : "They would gladly offer to the travellers whenever they required anything to eat or drink."[37]

Guru Nanak's travels afford several instances.[38]

From ancient times fasts have been observed with religious fervour in the Indian society.[39] Alberuni describes at length this custom which he declares to be "voluntary and supererogatory" with the Hindus.[40] Abul Fazl has written about its 12 different kinds, and enumerates 29 days on which a Hindu was obliged to fast for 24 hours every year.[41] It includes the anniversaries of the ten avatars as well as the eleventh day of each lunar fortnight of every month.[42]

Besides these obligatory fasts, most Hindus abstained from food frequently as a means of self-discipline[43] and on hygienic grounds.[44] Thevenot corroborates it, though with some exaggeration, that "none of them let a fortnight pass over without mortifying himself by abstinence.[45] They would even resort to this practice to cure several diseases.[46] In fact, a fast or even the practice of austerity in life was considered to be of religious merit.[47] Hindu women[48] were naturally more particular about it. These fasts might be complete or partial and for a longer or shorter period. The longer fasts might last for a month or even six weeks which Mandelslo rightly regards as nothing less than a miracle.[49] Fruits, sweetmeats and milk preparations were allowed to be taken during certain obligatory fasts.[50]

There was a good amount of literacy among the Hindu women in India during the ancient period. Attainment of knowledge was not considered a rare privilege for men only. The existence of a number of women scholars in different phases of our History illustrates this point. Silabhattarika, Devi, Vijayanka, Marula Morika, Subhadra etc. are renowned poetesses and scholars of the period.[51] Indulekha, Laxmi and Sheela were the other famous name in this field.[52] Unfortunately, seclusion and early marriage restricted the education of girls,[53] but there was no restriction or discrimination if a girl was talented and eager to persue higher learning. It shows the existence of the system of co-education,[54] though the number of aspirants was not large.[55] In urban areas they were trained in fine arts. Singing, dancing and playing on musical instruments were subjects befitting a noble damsel.[56] Kadambari and Mahasveta had this training.[57] In the Priyadarsika, the queen's maid-servant Angarika has been highly praised for her acquaintance with the musical minutiae like the different modes of playing in the ten forms, the threefold timings of quick, intermediate and slow and the threefold modes of tattva, Ojha and anugata.[58] In the Ratnavali, Sagarika is represented as entering the plantain bower with a brush and a drawing board in her hand to draw the picture of her lover.[59]

It is quite well known that Rajput princesses were adepts in the use of the sword and the spear. They could lead the armies and direct the government in the hour of need. Kurmadevi, a queen of King Samarasi took over the administration of her kingdom on her husband's death and repulsed the attacks of Kutub-ud-Din. Javahirdevi, a queen of king Sanga, died fighting at the head of her army, while defending Chittor after her husband's death.[60]

The tradition of giving military training to girls continued in the Maratha royal families, which were ruling over a considerable part of India during the 17th and 18th centuries. Rani Bhimabai, Tarabai etc. are the examples of such tradition.[61]

Some girls received religious and literary education. In the Kadambari Bana speaks of Mahasveta as performing the

Sandhya daily and muttering the Aghamarsana mantra.[62] In the Tilakamanjari we find Malayasundari represented not only as an expert dancer but also as a well-read girl, and the heroine Tilakmanjari practically knows everything that a pricess or a girl of an aristocratic family was expected to know.[63] Parivrajikas or female ascetics were generally well-educated. Going into the harem they told ancient tales, read out histories, imparted religious instructions and narrated sacred tales.[64] In the Priyadarsika, a parivarajika named Sankrtyayani has been represented as the author of a play dealing with the life of Udayana and Vasavadatta.[65] The Uttararamacarita of Bhavabhuti speaks of a female student Atreyi who first studied the Vedas in the hermitage of Valmiki and later on went to the Dandakaranya to continue her studies of Vedanta in the hermitage of Agastya and other sages.[66] Of women poets he mentions the names of Silabhattarika, Vikatanitamba, Vijayanka, Prabhudevi and Subhadra.[67] Rajasekhara's wife Avantisundari had her husband's dramas staged and witnessed them.[68] She is believed to have composed also a book on rhetorics, because some of her opinions are quoted by Rajasekhara himself in the Kavyamimansa.[69]

During Vedic age women were versed in music also. Women Women of lower class performed folk dance on the eve of important celebrations.[70] Music and dance prevailed in epic period as well. Gandharva and fairies sang sweet melodies on the birth and marriage ceremonies of Ramchandra.The name under fairies (dancers) include Ghrtachi, Menaka, Rambha, Mishrakeshi,Alambusa in Ramayana.[71] According to Vatsyayana the education of fine arts were essential for women class.[72] Raja Aja managed to teach fine arts for his wife Indumati.[73] Dancing women were appointed in temples also.[74] Music was the main source of recreation for common women. Even little girls used to sit with elder sisters and used to sing different kinds of songs. Different kinds of songs were written for different occasions. Women of the village used to sing marriage songs for fifteen days on marriage celebration. A comedy drama was played by girls which was called Jaluwa drama. Young girls used to sing with dance on the celebration of Tiz. When a son was born pleasure was shown with songs which was called Sohar. Sohars are sung with dance and other musical equipments as Dholak,Jhals and others. Some older women used to rise early and sing songs which were called Prati.

Some women used to go to the Holy Ganga with singing songs. Some festivals and other religious rituals were performed with sweet folk songs. Songs of Sitalamata were very popular on the worship of Kali. Chhatha Festival's songs were also very popular. Some women used to sing on Jata which were called Jatsar. Kajari songs were very popular in the month of Shravan. Many songs were written for the worship of Lord Shankar.

Art was also a means of recreation during the ancient period. We get a reference to Hariyadava, a Hun princess and the wife of Allatta, who founded a city named Harshpur.[75] Among the Various means of amusement playing musical instruments was quite popular with the females. They were skilled in playing instruments like Vina, Sitar, Flute, Majamir, Tabla and Sarangli.[76] Singing, dancing, painting, swinging, riding were the other popular means of their entertainment.[77] Swimming was also popular amongst women.[78] Though women lived in an era of seclusion and segregation, yet their means of recreation brought them out of their houses.[79]

During the medieval period also female education was cared for in India. No doubt, the education of females ~~and~~ did not receive much encouragement in the presence of child marriage and purdah,[80] but on the whole society was not indifferent towards their education. Although emphasis was not laid on educating females, yet it was not neglected. Arrangements were made for females to receive education.[81] Girls belonging to the aristocratic and other well-to-do classes generally received their education under private tutors, appointed by their parents or guardians for that purpose.[82] In Chandbardai's monumental work "Prithviraj Raso" we get a reference to princess Sanjogita's education under a lady Brahmin teacher named Madana. In this work Sanjogita is seen receiving instructions in 'Dharma' and Grahastha.[83] Besides, she was also taught 'Vinay Patha' (the art of humility).[84] In Malik Muhammad Jayasi's "Chitrarekha", too, we get some information about female education. Here, the heroine Chitrarekha begins her study at the age of five. A number of great teachers (gurus) teach her in succession till she herself becomes a great Pandit.[85] Some of them even excelled in the art of astrology.[86] It appears that Sultan Ghiyasuddin, who reigned in Malwa from 1469 to 1500, established within his seraglio all the separate offices of the court, and had at one, time, we are told, fifteen thousand women within his palace.

2 Among these were school-mistresses, musicians, women to read prayers, and persons of all professions and trades.[87] The very fact that he retained school-mistresses in the harem indicates that the ladies in the palace were taught by them. At the time of the Mughal emperors also female education was given and there is no reason to suppose that they lived and died in ignorance. Sometimes they did show some progress which was indeed creditable considering the comparative seclusion in which they were placed.[88]

Some Hindu ladies of the royal family took keen interest in music and were themselves good singers. Ratnavali, the wife of Puran Mal, sang Hindi melodies sweetly.[89] Man Singh's queen Mrignayni was expert in music.[90] Meera Bai was also a well-known singer.[91] Unfortunately, other contemporary sources are practically silent about the education of Hindu women. According to Dr. Sahu the education of Hindu girls was mainly confined to the royal families and the well-to-do classes. The growing curtailment of their freedom consequent upon the introduction of the Purdah system was largely responsible for the decline in their education. Women coming from the poorer sections of society had hardly any time and opportunity to read. The vast mass of

Indian women, particularly those living in the rural areas, remained illiterate.[92] They often helped their husband in the fields where they especially looked after cattle.[93] The activities of the women mainly centred round household chores. Isami has stressed that the place of women was the home.[94] They took keen interest in spinning, weaving, sewing, cooking and in serving food.[95] In Dvija Madhava's "Mangal Chandeer Geet" we find Khullana, the wife of a rich Bengali merchant, Dhanpati, cooking for her husband different delicious dishes, containing fine scented rice, mung dal (pulse), 'sag', Plantain-soup, ghee, hing in the vegetables, and fish (particularly of 'Rohu' and 'Surul' varieties).[96] In Ghanaram chakravarty's "Dharma Mangal", again, we find a reference to the preparation of a very rich food for the hero, Lausen, and it contained milk 'kheer', ghee', 'Puris', different kinds of vegetables and sags, (mainly mung) mango-pickles and relishes of different sorts, besides many other auxiliaries.[97] Hindu women who were well versed in household duties sought employment at low wages in the house of Muslims.[98] This depicts the pitiable condition to which they were reduced and were called upon to earn their livings in a hard way. Altekar also opined that during the Muslim rule the percentage of literacy among Hindu women went down with a great rapidity.[99] According to him the cultivation of the fine arts also declined during this period.[100] Of course, there was no education and respect for women and she was considered foolish and stupid.[101] But during the period under review they were versed in fine arts.[102]

Before the advent of Islam in India, education was the monopoly of the Brahmins who, for reasons of their own, refused to impart it to the low-born.[103] With the advent of Islam, however, this superciliousness was shaken off and education became the birth-right of every citizen - Muslims and Hindus, man and woman, rich and poor. In the Muslim schools, that were started in India, Hindus, who had hitherto been deprived of the intellectual feast, began to receive education side by side with their Muslim class-fellows and their existed no feelings of prejudice, ill-will or enmity between the two in so far as education was concerned.[104] Muslim kings also encouraged education among their Hindu subjects by granting Jagirs to deserving teachers, by making liberal allowances to and creating endowments for temples associated with their educational institutions and by ordering translation of Sanskrit literature as a whole.[105]

From the Jawar Inscription[106] of V.S. 1554 (1497 A.D.). We learn that Rama Bai, the daughter of Maharana Kumbha was well versed in music and Hindu Sastras. Mira Bai, the celebrated saint, seems to have been well-versed in Hindu philosophy. The death of her husband in prime of youth changed the course of her life and she devoted herself completely to Lord Krishna. Mirabai' devotional songs contain tender expression and are widely sung. It is believed that she imbibed ideas of dedications to Lord Krishna from her early childhood and maintained it throughout her life. This was the time, when Ramanand founded a new sect and taught Bhakti-Marg, according to which salvation can be attained through devotion irrespective of caste, creed, sex, etc. Mirabai was highly influenced by his teachings and decried in her songs all worldly discriminations between man and man. She thus laid a stress on adoption of Bhakti Marga for attainment of salvation and disfavoured complicated and manifold activities of yog, sacrifice and asceticism. According to her, it is rather a mirage to seek happiness in this transitory world. Her songs are, therefore, expressive of a true and deep routed desire for God. Out of several poetic compositions attributed to Mirabai, the songs are very famous.[107] Ras Bai, a princess of Delwada had a great taste for love stories, and for whom such books were copied out by a scribe named Amar Sagara.[108] Thus available evidence shows that education in royal household was not denied to princesses. They possessed wide knowledge, particularly of sacred and classical literature.

The education of women of middle-class was also in vogue. Sorath of Marwar, a lady from middle-class family, was interested in the reading of books.[109] Recently several eighteenth century letters,[110] referring to several aspects of the life in a harem, have been discovered in sealed bags addressed by ladies to the Maharajas or Maharanis of Jaipur show that a few women attached to the royal household were able to read and write, and were able to correspond in the local dialect of that area.

But it appears that the common people were not interested in sending their girls to schools and therefore the privilege of being educated was denied to them in our period.

There are numerous instances of highly educated and cultured Hindu women during the period under review. Khullana, the wife of Dhanapati, was thoroughly literate.[111] We find, again, in Mukundarama's 'Kavikankan Chandi', a reference to a fowler's wife, Phullara quoting copiously from the Ramayana and the Puranic stories in her conversation with her husband, Kalketu.[112] Further, there are instances to show that, in the domain of higher education, there were some such women who even rivalled men with admirable success. In the 'Vidya-Sundar' story by Bharat Chandra, for example, we find reference to a princess, Vidya, profoundly well-read and highly accomplished, engaged in discussing various knotty problems of Philosophy and religion with a prince, Sundar her future husband.[113] Instances of highly educated and accomplished ladies can be further multiplied. In the 'Ichchawati Haran,' for example, we find a reference to a princess, Ichchawati, studying literature, music and Kavya (poetry).[114] Prithviraj in his famous work entitled 'Beli Krishan Rukmani Reo' refers to the heroine, Rukmini, studying Vyakaran (grammar), the Puranas, the Smritis, the Shastras, Vidhi (law), the four Vedas and the six Vedangas, and she appears to have acquired a remarkable command over all these subjects.[115] In Bengal, from the 16th to the 18th centuries, we come across a number of talented poetesses and women scholars among whom mention, here may be made of Madhavi, Chandrawati (daughter of Bansidas, the famous poet of 'Manasamangal'), Priyambada (of the 16th century), Vaijanti (of the 17tth century) and Anandamayi (of the early 18th century).

We also find some instances of public women and dancing girls, distinguishing themselves in the field of education and intellectual attainments. The famous Hindi poet, Keshavadas, a contemporary of Akbar and Jahangir, refers to the six beautiful and highly talented female singers and dancers at the court of Inderjeet Singh, the ruler of Orchha state, namely Pravin Rai, Navarang Rai, Vichitranaina, Tantaranga, Rang Rai and Rangmurti. Of all these, Pravin Rai (or Rai Pravin) was the most accomplished in the fields of music, dancing and poetry, and she alone could compose poems of very high order.[117] Similarly, in the 'Dharmamangal' poems of Ghanaram Chakravarty, we find a reference to a public women, Suriksha, who had acquired a very high standard of education, as it is evident from the nature of her questions to Prince Lausen.[118] She is also said to have attained renown in needle-work.[119] It is to be noted that not only the mental but also the physical side of women was developed during the period under review, and in the Bengali literature we find even instances of women going to war in order to fight against the enemies. In the 'Dharmamangal' poems of Ghanaram Chakravarty, we find a reference to a low-caste women, Lakhi (belonging to the 'Dom community'), dressing herself as a soldier and then going to war.[120] In the same work we also find that one of the wives of Lauson, Kalinga, dressed herself like a soldier and went to fight against the king of Gaur, who had attacked her husbands's territory during his absence.[121]

The Nirgun aspect of Bhakti (devotion) also influenced a number of poetesses during the period under review. Among these the earliest reference is found of Indramati, the wife of Pran Nath who flourished in the sixteenth century and composed some Dohas in 1549 A.D.[122] During the reign of Akbar Ganga and Jamuna, the two disciples of Hitji, flourished. Others of the same school were Kalmashi Devi, Rani Rar Dhari and Navla Devi.[123] The tradition continued even afterwards and some of them flourished in the eighteenth century. Among them, mention may be made of Daya Bai, the disciple of Charan Das. She composed her poems about the middle of the eighteenth century. Two of her works which are available today are 'Daya Bodh' and 'Vinaya Malika'.[124] A contemporary of Daya Bai was Sahjo Bai who was also a disciple of Charan Das. One of her works knows as 'Sahaj Prakash' is available in which she has written about the importance of a good teacher and the qualities of a saint.[125]

Sagun Bhakti also attracted a number of female devotees during the period under review. It had two streams - the Krishnait school and the Ramait school. Lord Krishna attracted many female devotees, some of whom composed exquisite verses in praise of their Lord. Mira Bai, about whom I had already described, is the most prominent among them. She flourished in early sixteenth century. Various works of Mira such as 'Narsi Ji Ka Mahra', 'Gita Govinda Ki Tika', 'Rag Govinda', 'Garva Geet', 'Sphuta Pad' and 'Meera Ke Pad' are found even today.[126] Another poetess of this school was Bavri Saheb, who was a contemporary of Akbar. She was the disciple of Bhayanand and due to her excessive love for God she was known as Bavri (mad). She wrote many Padas and had a good command of Hindi and Urdu.[127] A third poetess of Krishnait School was Ganga Bai. She lived in Mahavan (near Mathura) and was a disciple of Vitthal Das. She worshipped the child form of Krishna. She wrote an independent work known as 'Ganga Bai Ke Pad'.[128] Son Kumari who flourished in the latter half of sixteenth century also belongs to this group. She was a princess of Amber family. She composed a work known as 'Swarn Beli Ki Kavita.'[129]

In the Ramait school of poetry, reference to only one Hindu poetess is found. Her name was Chandravati. She flourished in Bengal during the sixteenth century and was the daughter of famous poet Bansidas. She composed a Ramayan which is noted for its originality and poetic beauty.[130]

During the Mughal period there developed in Hindi poetry a tendency to emphasize the technique of poetry and to describe in vivid detail the physical beauty of women. The followers of this school were known the Reeti poets. Some Hindu ladies were also attracted to it, particularly to the second aspect of it which is known as Shrinagar poetry. The first amongst them is Praveen Rai Patur who was a singer and dancer by profession about whom I have discussed earlier. It is said that Rai Praveen used to sing her own compositions. The complete collection of her verses are not available but whatever scattered verses are available, they are sufficient to prove her genius and her originality of expression.[131] Another poetess of this school was Rup Mati who was the daughter of a prostitute of Sarangpur near Ujjain.[132] A third poetess named Teen Tarang also belonged to this group. She carried on her devotion to the art of poetry under the patronage of Raja Madhukar Shah of orchha. Kok Shashtra Granth is said to have been written by her.[133]

In Sanskrit the interest of ladies was gradually declining. There seems to be certain reasons for it. First, there was the rise of regional languages which was welcomed by the ladies. They had facilities for learning them and found it convenient and easier to express themselves through these languages rather than through Sanskrit. Secondly, there was the lack of proper Sanskrit education without which the ladies could not exeel in this sphere. Finally it was the impact of Persian language (which was the court language during this period) that Sanskrit was not given so much importance. Naturally, the ladies could not attain much proficiency in it. Reference is found of one Sanskrit poetess who flourished during this period. She was Priyamvada, the daughter of Shiva Ram, and the wife of Raghunath. She lived in Faridpur in East Bengal. She wrote the famous poem

'Shyama Rahasya' and her earliest verse is written in praise of Krishna.[134] Ramabhadramba, the author of Raghunathabhyudayam; Madhuravani, translator in verse of the Andhra-Ramayana; Tirumalamba, author of Varadambikaparinayam; and Mohanangi, author of the love poem Marchiparinayam are well-known Sanskrit poetesses of the period.[135] In Maharashtra Aka Bai and Kena Bai, disciples of Ramdas Swami were considered important literary figures in the 17th century.[136]

There was another group of poetesses who composed verses on diverse subjects such as morals, duty of women,devotion to husbands etc. The first amongst them is Ratnavali, the wife of famous saint poet Tulsi Das. She composed many couples.[137] Another poetess was Khaganiya who flourished in seventeenth century. She was born in a village near Unnao. She composed many riddles called Pahelis which are very popular.[138] A third poetess about whom scanty information is available, was the daughter-in-law of Keshava Das, the famous Hindi poet of the seventeenth century. She is said to have composed some verses in a meter known Savaiyya.[139] Finally one more lady who also composed some verses was Kavi Rani Chaube, the wife of Lok Nath Chaube, who was in the court of Budh Singh, the king of Bundi.The period of her compositions is towards the close of the seventeenth century.[140]

In addition to above there were some ladies in Rajasthan who composed verses in Dingal. The poetesses of Dingal resided in the palaces where they served the queens and entertained them.[141] One among them was Champa De Rani. She was married to Prithviraj, the brother of the king of Bikaner, who was also used to compose verses. She assisted her husband in composing verses. Her works are not available. Her period of composition is towards the close of the sixteenth century.[142] Another poetess of Dingal was Padma Charini who also flourished during the same period. She was the daughter of Charan Mal Ji Sahu and the wife of Bharat Shankar. She served in the palace of Bikaner to earn her livelihood.[143] A third poetess named Kak Rechi Ji also belonged to this group. She flourished during the reign of Shahjehan. She was the daughter of Thakur Baghela Aggra Ji and was married to Nahar Narhar Das of Marwar. Her husband died in a war during the reign of Shahjehan.[144] A poetess named Nathi, who was a devotee of Lord Vishnu, also composed some good verses. She flourished in the reign of Aurangzeb.[145] All these poetesses of Dingal composed verses, devotional padas and dohas. Shrinagar Ras Predominates their verses. From the literary point of view their poems cannot be rated very highly.[146]

Ladies were interested in various types of fine arts. They often spent their leisure in painting, decoration,dance, music etc. which attracted them most. The art of painting was one of the favourite pastimes of the ladies. It is difficult to say whether they achieved any distinction in this art but there are evidences to prove that they actively indulged themselves in this art. Rajput ladies were found of painting and their contribution in this field is admirable. Even ladies of poor and middle class also participated in painting. Some pictures of flowers were drawn with pencil on white and coloured clothes or papers. They draw the painting of animals. Some painting works were often seen on the occasion of marriage. House was decorated with coloured paintings. This painting is seen even today in rural society. In the absence of any positive information, it is not possible to find out the general motives and techniques followed by such ladies.

Ladies were also interested in the art of decoration but they mostly confined themselves to their houses. Firstly they decorated their rooms. Purdah was seen on the door and window with attractive pictures which were manufactured by them. They indulged themselves for cleaning their houses. Some pictures were seen on the wall. Wall was decorated by Photos mostly manufactured by them. House was beautifully decorated on the marriage celebration. The best example of decoration was seen in the beautificationof Mandap.

Sometimes pipes and drinking cups added to their enjoyment and they often had a puff or a slip to make themselves more lively. Smoking of Hukka had become very popular. It was used to entertain guests. Drinking was common in upper Rajput class. References are seen in contemporary Hindi literature to liquor being used by women.[147] Some ladies of royal class played chess, cards, chaupar, Pachisi, etc. There are various paintings which depict women busy at these games.[148] Cooking was their mai function in which their most time was spent. They used to take special interest in cooking. They participated in fairs and feasts which was generally arranged on different occasions.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization by A.S.Altekar, pp. 11-12.

2. To name a few - Indrani, Sarama, Urvasi, Laksa, Gauri, pp. 1-3.

3. Indra, p. 127.

4. Altekar,p. 208; Indra, pp. 210-212.

5. Altekar, p. 209.

6. D.D.Kosambi, p. 168.

7. R.C.Mazumdar, p. 275.

8. Ibid., p. 255.

9. S.Mukerji,pp.143-144.

10. Hasht Bahist, p. 31.

11. Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan by K.M. Ashraf, p. 238.

12. Chaitanya and his Age by Sen, p. 128.

13. Mewar and the Mughal emperors, by G.N.Sharma, p. 152.

14. Fawaid-ul-Fuad, p. 22; Khair-ul-Majalis,p.218.

15. Fawaid-ul-Fuad, p. 165.

16. Religion and Politics by Prof. Nizami, p. 203.

17. Women in Delhi Sultanate by Lokesh Chandra Nand, pp.142-43

18. Influence of Islam on Indian Culture by Tarachand, p.145; Society and Culture by Rashid, p. 243.

19. Ibid.

20. Society and culture by Rashid, p. 243.

21. Surasari was the wife of Surasuranand.

22. Women in Delhi Sultanate by Lokesh Chandra Nand, p. 117.

23. Sri Vallabhacharya by Bhai Manilal Parekh, p. 79.

24. Chaitanya and his Age, by Sen, p. 4.

25. Women in Delhi Sultanate by Lokesh Chandra Nand, p.127.

26. The spirit of Muslim Government by K.S. Lal, pp. 51-52; Fatwa-i-Jahandari (B), Tr. Mohd. Habib and Mrs. Afsar, p. 16.

27. The spirit of Muslim Government by K.S.Lal, pp. 51-52.

28. Hasht Bahisht, p. 29.

29. Ibn Battutah, Tr. Gibb, pp. 191-192.

30. Tod, I., p. 363, p. 381; Ashraf, p. 192; Sahu, p.205; Twilight of Sultanate by K.S.Lal, p. 269; Medieval Malwa by U.N.Day, p. 50.

31. Matlaul Anwar, p. 231.

32. Ain, III, p. 9.

33. Della Valle, p. 69; Tavernier, I, p. 225.

34. Ibid.

35. Alberuni's India, II (Sachau), p. 149.

36. Orme's Fragments, p. 431.

37. Tavernier, I, p. 225.

38. Macauliffe, I, p. 88.

39. Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, I, by Dubois, pp. 271-75; Alberuni (Sachau), II, p.172; Ain., III (Sarkar) pp. 327-28.

40. Alberuni (Sachau), II, p. 172.

41. Ain (Sarkar), III, p. 326.

42. Ibid.

43. Indian Culture, Vol. X, No.3, p. 98.

44. Dubois, I, p. 274.

45. Thevenot, op.cit., p. 115.

46. Careri (Sen,op.cit.,). p. 274.

47. Mandelslo, p. 54.

48. Thevenot, p. 115.

49. Mandelslo, p. 54.

50. Ain(Sarkar), III, p. 326-27.

51. The position of women in Hindu civilization by A.S.Altekar, pp. 17-18.

52. Ojha Culture, p. 64.

53. B.P.Mazumdar,p.139; B.N.Sharma, p. 29; G.N.Sharma,p.278.

54. Altekar,p.14; G.N.Sharma, p. 278.

55. Altekar,p.14.

56. Priyadarsika, p. 16.

57. HC, Chap. IV, p. 140; Kadambari,p.324.

58. Act II, p. 62.

59. Act II, p.32.

60. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, by A.S. Altekar, p. 22.

61. Ibid., p. 22.

62. Kadambari, p. 327.

63. Tilakamanjari,pp.137,215.

64. Kadambari, p. 181.

65. Act, III, p. 401.

66. URC, II. 3.

67. Jalhana's Suktimuktavali,p.47,VV. p. 91-95.

68. Karpuramanjari,I, p. 11.

69. Kavyamimansa by Rajasekhara, pp. 20, 46 and 59.

70. Bhartiya Samgita Ka Itihasa by S.S.Paranjape,p.41.

71. Ibid., p. 137.

72. Kamsutra by Vatsayayana, Part 1, 3,16-23,pp.32-41.

73. Bharatiya Samgit Ka Itihasa by S.S.Paranjape,p.488.

74. Ibid., p. 483.

75. Ojha, II, p.428; Indian Antiquity, Vol.39, p. 191.

76. Tarikh-i-Shahi,Tr.Rizvi,Uttar Timur I, p.353; Society and Culture by Rashid, p. 134.

77. Society and Culture by Rashid, p. 136.

78. Ibid., p. 35.

79. Women in Delhi Sultanate by L.C.Nand, p. 207.

80. Promotion of learning in India by N.N.Law,p.200; Some aspects of North Indian Social Life by K.P.Sahu,P.143.

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84. Ibid., Samay 42, dohas 47-48, p. 234.

85. "Chitrarekha", by Malik Muhammad Jayasi,pub.by Hindi Pracharak Pustakalaya, Varanasi, 1st edn., April,1959, p.81.

86. Isami, II, p. 296.

87. Ferishta,Vol.IV, p. 236.

88. Promotion of learning in India by N.N.Law,pp.201-05.

89. Tarikh-i-Shershahi by Abbas Khan (E & D), Vol. IV,p.402.

90. Bhartiya Sangeet Ka Itihas by Umesh Joshi,p.204.

91. Ibid., p. 246.

92. Some aspects of North Indian Social Life by K.P.Sahu, pp. 144-145.

93. Life and conditions of the people of Hindustan by K.M. Ashraf, p. 114.

94. Isami,Text., p. 129.

95. Hasht Bahisht,Text, p. 28; Khair-ul-Majalis,p. 93; Fawâid-ul-Fuad, p. 118.

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98. Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi,(B), Tr.Fuller and Khallaque,p.79.

99. The Position of women in Hindu Civilization by A.S. Altekar, p. 23.

100. Ibid., p. 24.

101. Ram Charit Manas, by Tulsidas, Part I, p. 56.

102. Ram Chandrika, by Keshav, p. 173,220.

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122. Madhya Kaleen Hindi Kavitriyan by Savitri Sinha, p. 83.

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124. Madhyakaleen Hindi Kavitriyan by Savitri Sinha, p. 67.

125. Ibid., pp. 51-52.

126. Ibid., pp. 131-32.

127. Hindi Sahitya by Dwivedi, p.140.

128. Madhyakaleen Hindi Kavitriyan by Savitri Sinha,p.158.

129. Ibid., p. 163.

130. Aspects of Bengali Society by T.C.Das Gupta, p. 201.

131. Madhyakaleen Hindi Kavitriya by Savitri Sinha,pp.240-41.

132. Ibid., p. 248.

133. Ibid., p. 252.

134. History of Classical Sanskrit Literature by M.Krishnamachari, p. 394.

135. History of Sanskrit Literature by Das Gupta and S.K. De, pp. 417-18.

136. Life and Letters under the Mughals by P.N.Chopra,p.121.

137. Madhyakaleen Hindi Kavitriyan by Savitri Sinha,p.280.

138. Ibid., p. 287.

139. Ibid., p. 288.

140. Ibid., p. 289.

141. Ibid., p. 28.

142. Ibid., pp.36-37.

143. Ibid., pp. 30-31.

144. Ibid., p. 35.

145. Ibid., p. 34.

146. Ibid., p..28.

147. Bihari Satsai, Dohas - 358,359,360,361, pp. 127-28.

148. Mughal Painting by Coomaraswamy, pp.26-27.

CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

In India, women have enjoyed a subordinate yet honourable status in society right from the earliest days. During the ancient period there are instances of queens successfully ruling their kingdom. They did not hesitate even to take up arms to protect the life of their family and honour of their country. The birth of a son was of great pleasure but the birth of a daughter was also not accepted as a curse. But the position of Hindu women in society deteriorated during the Sultanate and Mughal period. The birth of a daughter was now understood as a curse of misery. They enjoyed partial liberty in marriage and their role in social life shortened.

The role of Hindu women in Harem is an unique episode of Medieval period. The Turkish word 'Harem' is derived from Arabic 'Haruma', normally meaning thereby forbidden, not permitted or illegal. It has been generally employed to denote that part of the house or the palace in which the women lived. The seraglio (Harem) included other women besides the wives and the concubines of the ruler. Among them were included their mothers, sisters and other female relations. The practice of having harem by the emperors or Rajas dates back to the ancient time. The harem was named Antahpura or Antah Vasara during the reign of Harsha. The harem under the Sultanate period "signified the totality of the female inmates, who were excluded from the view of the public." In our period of review the harem portion in the palace of the emperor was called Mahal both by the chroniclers of the time and the European travellers.

Generally the activities of women centered around household affairs and their participation in public and political sphere was not much welcomed. Probably it was due to the fact that women were considered fickle and incompetent to keep secrets. Even Buddha who tried to enhance the status of women gave no latitude to women for interfering in state craft. However, while in theory the women played no role in the affair of the state, indirectly their presence was amply felt in these matters. Draupadi, Kunti, Kaushlya are but a few instances of how the chief queens dominated the rulers. Sometimes these ambitious ladies interfered in political activities by ruling in their husband's name and often eclipsing their husband who became a mere rubber stamp.

The other manner in which women entered the political arena was when they acted as regents and ruled the empire when the rightful heir was a minor. Rajput queen mothers who exploited this opportunity by taking up the reigns of the government were Maha Laxmi, Raja Allatt's mother and Halus Bai, Mokal's mother. Sobhagya Devi and Karpura Devi too executed their ambitious designs, while they acted as regents of the heir apparent.

During the sultanate period Hindu ladies also entered the harem. Alaud-din's marriage with Kamla Devi and her entry into the harem provides first example of this practice. It was followed by similar marriages of Sultans or princes with Hindu ladies. It is said that Alauddin married the daughter of Ram Chandra Dev too. He married his son Khizr Khan to Deval Devi, daughter of Rai Karan. Firoz Tughluq was born of a Rajput lady. Even Sikandar Lodi's mother was a Hindu lady. But Sultans did not take Hindu women in confidence. Therefore, the entrance of these ladies into Harem did not make any outstanding contribution or influence in politics.

The lady who played an important role in politics during Mughal period was Rani Karmavati, a wife of Rana Sanga. She exercised considerable influence over her husband and manipulated to get huge jagirs for her sons Vikram and Uda. She also pushed their claims for the throne of Mewar. Outside the Mughal harem, the Hindu women who played a significant role during this period was Durgavati. She was commonly known as Rani. After the death of her husband in 1548 A.D. She became the regent of her son Bir Narain and ruled at Garha by exercising real authority. Her country was better administered and more prosperous than that of Akbar the Great.

The other Hindu women who famed herself in politics was Jeeja Bai, Tarabai and Ahalyabai. Mariam uz Zamani popularly known as Jodha Bai, the wife of Akbar the Great also influenced the court. During this period Hindu influence at court increased rapidly. At Fatehpur Sikri the Rajput queen's Golden House and its little garden can still be seen. The lady was the mother of the Emperor Jahangir, whose first wife was also a Rajput princess. This lady became the mother of Shahjehan, the Great builder (Magnificent). Thus we can say that so many Hindu ladies played a dominant role in northern Indian politics. These ladies advised kings on many points. Kings also respected and obeyed their wise suggestions on several occasions. Their entry into Mughal harem remained influencial and active in political, strategical, administrative, social and cultural spheres.

The position of women as a wife, in Hindu society was not quite satisfactory. She was sometimes treated as an ordinary maid. She had to serve and please every member of the family. Again she had to prove herself to be a devoted wife who could not take meals until her husband took meals. It is also sad to see that she was more or less helpless and was fully dependent on her husband. She was given little respect and rest. she got rest only during pregnancy period. During this period people prayed for her health and safety. But all is not dark and gloomy about her position. Traditionally she was considered to be 'ardhangini' or half of her counterparts. No rite or ceremony could be performed without her company. So, as stated above, the women were not always in adverse position. This is quite natural in view of the traditional ideals of Hinduism.

Again it may be noted here that the women also realised her position and responsibilities as a Hindu wife and used to adore her husband with all sincerity and feeling. The husband also gave her all tenderness, love and protection. So in the majority of cases conjugal life was quite happy and cordial in Hindu families in comparison to Muslim families. Of course some well-to-do and highly respectable Rajput ladies were reluctant and uncompromising in their approach and this resulted in tension in the families. But by and large the atmosphere appeared to be quite cordial and congenial. Husband and wife trusted each other and had a sense of mutual respect.

The position of women as a widow was not satisfactory. Her appearance was considered to be quite inauspicious. The family and the society did not take proper care of her. They were deprived of common and simple things of life. These unfortunate creatures were subject to all kinds of humiliations and they had to live with their parents, who treated them no better than ordinary maids, doing all the menial jobs in the house.

But the state was perhaps particular regarding the welfare of the widows. Justice was imparted to them without any discrimination. The Sultan could be summoned by the Qazi when the question of justice to a widow was concerned. Contemporary sources informs us that some serious attempt was made to ameliorate the abject condition of a widow in Mughal period. The Kotah and Jodhpur records furnish a list of widows who were receiving regular aids from the state in the 18th century. Despite all these it is worthmentioning here that she had disability regarding proprietary one. She was not regarded as an heir to her husband's property. The property of her deceased husband was looked after by the next senior male member of the family, uncle or son. Her claim in practice was only to her maintenance.

The position of women as a mother was pious and respectable. The first lesson of a child starts in his mother's lap. So a mother plays a dominant role in influencing the character of her children. If the mother is good, gentle and God fearing the children will naturally inherit these virtues.

Similarly she was respected as well. No one could proceed on a journey without seeking the blessings of his mother by touching her feet. In fact, Hindu law givers clearly pointed out that mother has to be respected more than the father. Rajputs showed greater respect and regard for their mothers. They used to pay respect to their mothers before taking their meals.

Hinduism has three main socio-religious rites — Birth, marriage and Funeral rites. These rituals are termed Samskaras. The birth of a daughter was considered inauspicious. She was not as welcome as a boy. A wife who unfortunately gave birth to girls in succession was despised and even sometimes divorced. The custom of infanticide was also confined to a very minor section of the less cultured Rajput families. Marriage according to the Hindu scheme is supposed to be a sacred bond. It occupies a very important place in the life of women because upon its success depends the happiness of their whole life. It is the civilised step to enter into the Grihasthasrama from Brahmacharasrama. Generally child marriage was prevalent among the Hindus during the period under review. There were eight forms of marriage prevalent among the Hindus viz. Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prejapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa and Paisacha. Marriage took place between the boy and the girl of the same caste or sub-caste as it is to-day. Inter-caste marriage was out of vogue and took place only in exceptional circumstances. The practice of dowry and polygamy was also prevalent among the Hindus of the period under survey. The nature of dowry varied according to the economic standard and the social status of the parties concerned. Another form of dowry was also in vogue in those days. In this it was the bride's side and not the bridegroom's which received the dowry. It was prevalent in medieval Bengal and it seems to have continued there as late as the mid-18th century. This second form of marriage was particularly followed in cases of aged and moneyed grooms who wanted to marry young girls. The common man was monogamous. Polygamy often prevailed in the rich and ruling sections of society. So far as divorce is concerned we find that it was not allowed among the Hindus, except in the cases of low castes and the shudras. Marriages among the upper caste Hindus were indissolvable and as such, the cruel hands of death alone could separate a couple from each other.

The last ceremony was Sraddha and Tarpan. Death to a Hindu was not the end of his journey but a change in the journey from one life to another. Although throwing the dead body in the water or burial was not unknown to the Hindus, yet burning of the corpse was universally popular amongst the Hindus during this period. Cremation was generally performed at the bank of the river. After the funeral a prescribed period of 12 to 30 days, varying from caste to caste, was spent in performing various ceremonies. These included superstitious rites as well and were taken recourse to ensure that the spirit of the dead man did not return. In short it may be concludingly observed here that the then Hindus followed more or less similar funeral rites and other ceremonies of Sraddha which are being followed now-a-days.

The death of husband was the greatest tragedy, the saddest calamity in the life of a Hindu woman. Widow re-marriage was not allowed among the Hindus, excepting certain lower castes. A widow had either to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, or on a separate pyre soon after his death or had to lead a life of abysmal anguish, of unending sufferings and woe, devoid of all the charms of earthly life. The practice of self-immolation of women after the death of husband was called Sati and it dates back to the ancient times. But it appears to have been voluntary at that time. During the period under review, the practice of Sati became obligatory and binding in nature. The element of compulsion turned Sati into a distressing and dreadful practice.

It may be mentioned here that the Mughal emperors tried to ban this practice or at least to check it. Humayun wanted to prohibit it in the case of those widows who had passed the child-bearing age, but no adequate and effective steps were taken by him in this matter. Akbar also could not abolish Sati altogether, but he is said to have issued an edict banning compulsion in it. Akbar's regulation against Sati was not merely a pious expression of his individual opinion. On the other hand, the Emperor is reported to have interfered personally in certain cases of Sati and stopped the performance of the rites. Emperor Jahangir also tried his best to follow the foot-steps of his illustrious father in this respect, and he is said to have prohibited. Sati performed without prior royal permission, especially in the cases of young widows whose marriages had not been consummated. Aurangzeb appears to have taken a stern step in this direction. He did not

not permit the widows who had children to burn under any circumstances.

Besides the rulers, almost all the religious preachers deprecated this evil and condemned it outright. But no one could succeed fully in this regard. It could be banned and stopped only when strict legislations were enforced by the British rulers, though even today occasional cases of Sati prominently figure in newspapers.

The other important medieval social custom which flourished side by side with that of Sati was Jauhar. It was, by and large, confined to the brave Rajputs. It was observed when a Rajput chief and his warriors were reduced to utter despair in an engagement. They usually resorted to the acts of setting fire to their holdings along with their wives and children when there was no hope of their survival, and there was every likelihood of their family falling into the hands of their enemies. The custom like Sati was also of great antiquity and could be traced back to some thousand years before the dawn of christianity, though not in the form in which it was prevalent in medieval times. The performers of Jauhar were much honoured and worshipped like goddesses in temples and shrines.

In the field of religion Hindu women played an important role by participating in the performance of penance, fasts, worships of deities and recitation of hymns. They were leading a virtuous life and remained pure in thoughts, words and deeds. Various references are found when females sacrificed their lives in order to maintain their chastity. Charity and fasting have been shown by the Hindu women during the period under review. Sometimes they abstained from food frequently as a means of self-discipline. During the medieval period female education was cared for in India. No doubt, the education of females did not receive much encouragement in the presence of child marriage and purdah, but on the whole society was not indifferent towards their education. Girls belonging to the aristocratic and other well-to-do classes received education in proper way. The education of women of middle-class was also in vogue. But it appears that the common people were not interested in sending their girls to schools and therefore the privilege of being educated was denied to them in our period. It is to be noted that not only the mental but also the physical side of women was developed during the period under review. We find even instances of women going to war in order to fight against the enemies. The tradition of giving military training to girls continued in the Maratha royal families which were ruling over a considerable part of India during the 17th and 18th centuries. Hindu women were also interested in various types of fine arts. They often spent their leisure in painting, decoration dance, music etc. which attracted them most. Some ladies of royal class played chess, cards, chaupar, Pachisi etc. There are various paintings which depict women busy at these games.

Reviewing the above mentioned facts regarding the status of Hindu women I come to this conclusion that their political, social, economic and cultural status deteriorated to a great extent in comparison to earlier Hindu society. We see the following deteriorations - Purdah, child marriage, Sati, female infanticide etc. All these evils are the result of the impact of Muslim society but Hindu mentality cannot also be escaped.

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CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION

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In India, women have enjoyed a subordinate yet honourable status in society right from the earliest days. During the ancient period there are instances of queens successfully ruling their kingdom. They did not hesitate even to take up arms to protect the life of their family and honour of their country. The birth of a son was of great pleasure but the birth of a daughter was also not accepted as a curse. But the position of Hindu women in society deteriorated during the Sultanate and Mughal period. The birth of a daughter was now understood as a curse of misery. They enjoyed partial liberty in marriage and their role in social life shortened.

The role of Hindu women in Harem is an unique episode of Medieval period. The Turkish word 'Harem' is derived from Arabic 'Haruma', normally meaning thereby forbidden, not permitted or illegal. It has been generally employed to denote that part of the house or the palace in which the women lived. The seraglio (Harem) included other women besides the wives and the concubines of the ruler. Among them were included their mothers, sisters and other female relations. The practice of having harem by the emperors or Rajas dates back to the ancient time. The harem was named Antahpura or Antah Vasara during the reign of Harsha. The harem under the Sultanate period "signified the totality of the female inmates, who were excluded from the view of the public." In our period of review the harem portion in the palace of the emperor was called Mahal both by the chroniclers of the time and the European travellers.

Generally the activities of women centered around household affairs and their participation in public and political sphere was not much welcomed. Probably it was due to the fact that women were considered fickle and incompetent to keep secrets. Even Buddha who tried to enhance the status of women gave no latitude to women for interfering in state craft. However, while in theory the women played no role in the affair of the state, indirectly their presence was amply felt in these matters. Draupadi, Kunti, Kaushlya are but a few instances of how the chief queens dominated the rulers. Sometimes these ambitious ladies interfered in political activities by ruling in their husband's name and often eclipsing their husband who became a mere rubber stamp.

The other manner in which women entered the political arena was when they acted as regents and ruled the empire when the rightful heir was a minor. Rajput queen mothers who exploited this opportunity by taking up the reigns of the government were Maha Laxmi, Raja Allatt's mother and Hasus Bai, Mokal's mother. Sobhagya Devi and Karpura Devi too executed their ambitious designs, while they acted as regents of the heir apparent.

During the sultanate period Hindu ladies also entered the harem. Alaud-din's marriage with Kamla Devi and her entry into the harem provides first example of this practice. It was followed by similar marriages of Sultans or princes with Hindu ladies. It is said that Alauddin married the daughter of Ram Chandra Dev too. He married his son Khizr Khan to Deval Devi, daughter of Rai Karan. Firoz Tughluq was born of a Rajput lady. Even Sikandar Lodi's mother was a Hindu lady. But Sultans did not take Hindu women in confidence. Therefore, the entrance of these ladies into Harem did not make any outstanding contribution or influence in politics.

The lady who played an important role in politics during Mughal period was Rani Karmavati, a wife of Rana Sanga. She exercised considerable influence over her husband and manipulated to get huge jagirs for her sons Vikram and Uda. She also pushed their claims for the throne of Mewar. Outside the Mughal harem, the Hindu women who played a significant role during this period was Durgavati. She was commonly known as Rani. After the death of her husband in 1548 A.D. She became the regent of her son Bir Narain and ruled at Garha by exercising real authority. Her country was better administered and more prosperous than that of Akbar the Great.

The other Hindu women who famed herself in politics was Jeeja Bai, Tarabai and Ahalyabai. Mariam uz Zamani popularly known as Jodha Bai, the wife of Akbar the Great also influenced the court. During this period Hindu influence at court increased rapidly. At Fatehpur Sikri the Rajput queen's Golden House and its little garden can still be seen. The lady was the mother of the Emperor Jahangir, whose first wife was also a Rajput princess. This lady became the mother of Shahjehan, the Great builder (Magnificent). Thus we can say that so many Hindu ladies played a dominant role in northern Indian politics. These ladies advised kings on many points. Kings also respected and obeyed their wise suggestions on several occasions. Their entry into Mughal harem remained influencial and active in political, strategical, administrative, social and cultural spheres.

The position of women as a wife, in Hindu society was not quite satisfactory. She was sometimes treated as an ordinary maid. She had to serve and please every member of the family. Again she had to prove herself to be a devoted wife who could not take meals until her husband took meals. It is also sad to see that she was more or less helpless and was fully dependent on her husband. She was given little respect and rest. she got rest only during pregnancy period. During this period people prayed for her health and safety. But all is not dark and gloomy about her position. Traditionally she was considered to be 'ardhangini' or half of her counterparts. No rite or ceremony could be performed without her company. So, as stated above, the women were not always in adverse position. This is quite natural in view of the traditional ideals of Hinduism.

Again it may be noted here that the women also realised her position and responsibilities as a Hindu wife and used to adore her husband with all sincerity and feeling. The husband also gave her all tenderness, love and protection. So in the majority of cases conjugal life was quite happy and cordial in Hindu families in comparison to Muslim families. Of course some well-to-do and highly respectable Rajput ladies were reluctant and uncompromising in their approach and this resulted in tension in the families. But by and large the atmosphere appeared to be quite cordial and congenial. Husband and wife trusted each other and had a sense of mutual respect.

The position of women as a widow was not satisfactory. Her appearance was considered to be quite inauspicious. The family and the society did not take proper care of her. They were deprived of common and simple things of life. These unfortunate creatures were subject to all kinds of humiliations and they had to live with their parents, who treated them no better than ordinary maids, doing all the menial jobs in the house.

But the state was perhaps particular regarding the welfare of the widows. Justice was imparted to them without any discrimination. The Sultan could be summoned by the Qazi when the question of justice to a widow was concerned. Contemporary sources informs us that some serious attempt was made to ameliorate the abject condition of a widow in Mughal period. The Kotah and Jodhpur records furnish a list of widows who were receiving regular aids from the state in the 18th century. Despite all these it is worthmentioning here that she had disability regarding proprietary one. She was not regarded as an heir to her husband's property. The property of her deceased husband was looked after by the next senior male member of the family, uncle or son. Her claim in practice was only to her maintenance.

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